

797  
C77





*Presented to the*

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
LIBRARY

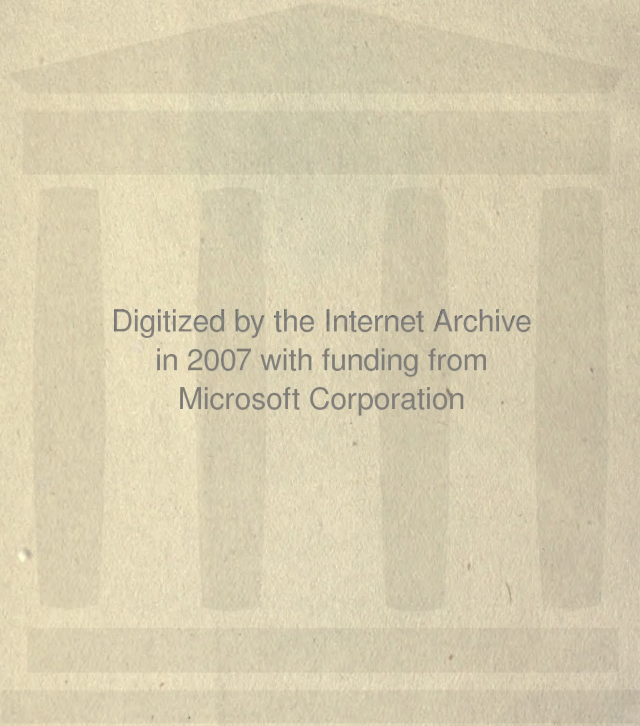
*by the*

ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE  
LIBRARY

1980







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation





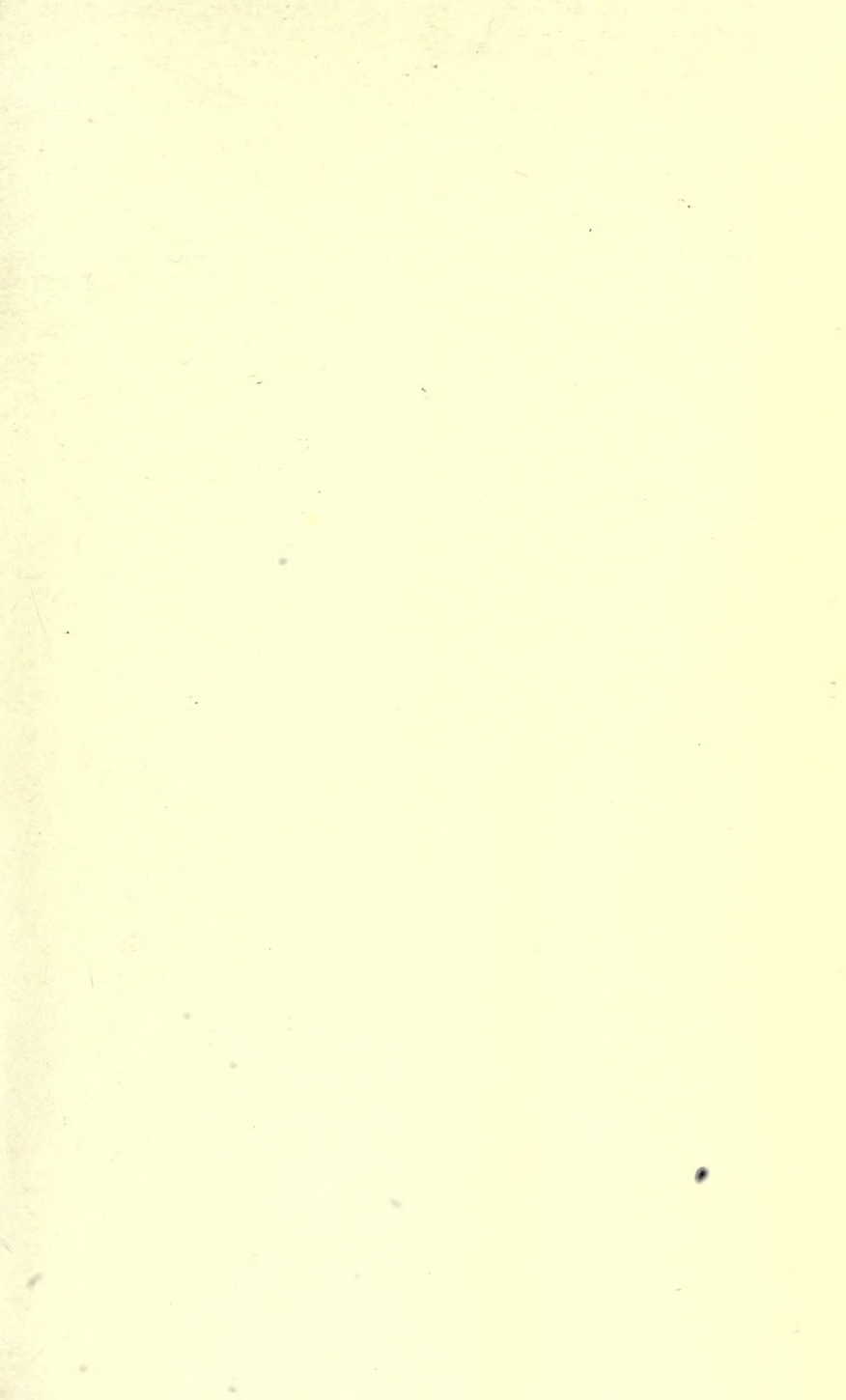


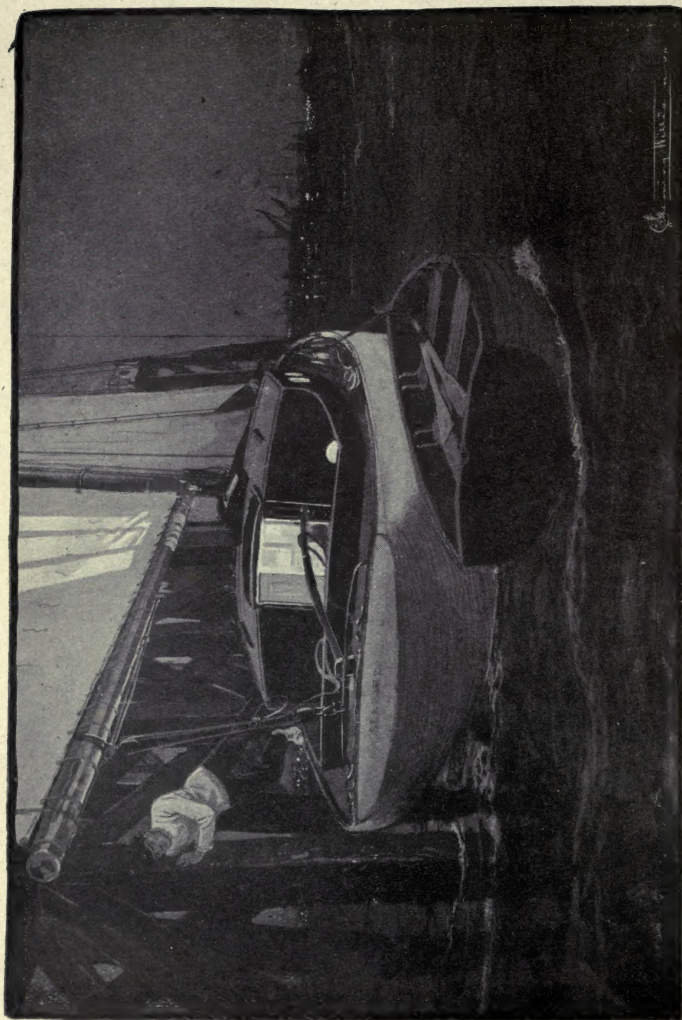


IN TIDAL WATERS









*Frontispiece.*

“By pushing with all my weight and strength, I could just manage to shove the boat clear of one pile on to the next” (page 213).



43903

# IN TIDAL WATERS



BY

FRANCIS B. COOKE

AUTHOR OF "THE CORINTHIAN YACHTSMAN'S HANDBOOK," "CRUISING  
HINTS," "SEAMANSHIP FOR SMALL YACHTS," "YACHT-  
RACING FOR AMATEURS," ETC.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS*

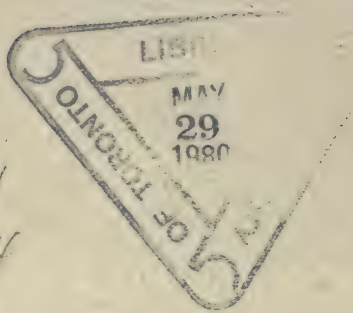


LONDON

CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.

1919

GV  
814  
C6



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,  
BRUNSWICK ST., STAMFORD ST., S.E. 1,  
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.



## PREFACE

THOSE whose ideas of yachting have been derived from lounging on the deck of a large steam-yacht at Cowes during the Regatta Week, with an obsequious steward in attendance, will probably find little to interest them in these pages, as the cruises described were for the most part carried out in what the East Coast waterman usually terms "little old tore-outs." The boats were certainly inexpensive, and in some cases not even seaworthy; but in the golden days of youth all our geese are swans, and I spent in them some of the happiest days of my life. It is not by any means the man with the longest purse who gets the most fun out of yachting, and no youngster with a fancy for the sea need be deterred from taking up the sport by any mistaken ideas as to its cost. The expense will be just what he likes to make it, for it is merely a question of cutting the coat according to the cloth.

Many of these little sailing sketches and reminiscences originally appeared in *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *The Yachting World*, and *The Yachtsman*; and I am indebted to the Proprietors of those journals for kindly permitting me to reprint them in this form. The events

recorded being mainly based upon fact, or at any rate having a strong substratum of truth, I have thought it desirable for obvious reasons to change in some instances the names of yachts, persons, and places.

F. B. C.





## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	V
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. MY FIRST BOAT . . . . .	6
III. MULTUM IN PARVO . . . . .	15
IV. PILED UP. . . . .	30
V. A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS . . . . .	40
VI. BUYING EXPERIENCE . . . . .	47
VII. <i>TIERCEL</i> AGAIN . . . . .	56
VIII. FOG-BOUND . . . . .	66
IX. DOWN SWIN . . . . .	75
X. IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINE . . . . .	85
XI. THE BUILDING OF <i>SLEUTHHOUND</i> . . . . .	101
XII. A NIGHT ON THE SANDS . . . . .	112
XIII. A TABLOID CRUISER . . . . .	120
XIV. THE SALT-WATER CURE . . . . .	134
XV. BRINGING HOME THE BOAT . . . . .	146
XVI. <i>SNIPE</i> . . . . .	155
XVII. CRUISING IN <i>SNIPE</i> . . . . .	168
XVIII. EASTER YACHTING . . . . .	180

# viii CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
XIX. CRUISING IN COMPANY . . . . .	190
XX. LOWESTOFT . . . . .	198
XXI. A NIGHT AT SEA . . . . .	212
XXII. BREAKERS AHEAD . . . . .	221
XXIII. AN AUTUMN PASSAGE . . . . .	232



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing page</i>
"By pushing with all my weight and strength, I could just manage to shove the boat clear of one pile on to the next" <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"The work had to be carried on by the uncertain light of the hurricane lantern" . . . . .	37
"Marooned on a mooring buoy in the middle of St. Clement's Reach" . . . . .	44
"If you think I'm a-goin' to sit up all night pumping the bloomin' Thames through 'er, I ain't" . . . . .	54
"We emerged from the cabin in time to see a great barge slithering away into the darkness" . . . . .	63
"The yacht listed until the water poured over the coamings" . . . . .	71
"A huge wave broke with a mighty roar right over us" . . . . .	82
"There was no alternative but to remove my nether garments" . . . . .	113
"As we watched her crashing through the seas, we thought with dismay of what lay before us" . . . . .	152
"He speedily 'laid all before him,' as Kipling hath it" . . . . .	184
"I made repeated ineffectual dabs at the reef cringle" . . . . .	227
"A great wave picked her up and literally hurled her into the smooth water of the haven" . . . . .	240





# IN TIDAL WATERS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A LOVE of the sea and ships is the heritage of every Briton. If you doubt the truth of this assertion, take your small son, preferably in his best clothes, to a brickfield in which there is a muddy pond and leave him there for half-an-hour. When you return you will in all probability find him braving the perils of the deep on a rude raft constructed from any old planks that happened to be lying about. Again, take him at a still more tender age into a toy-shop and ask him what he would like. He will without hesitation choose a "real Cowes cutter," priced at a shilling or thereabouts, in blissful ignorance of the fact that it will float only on its side. And it may be remarked in parenthesis that history is likely to repeat itself, for when in after life he comes to buy his first yacht it is quite within the bounds of possibility that he will learn once more that boats are not always what they seem.

If this love of boats is not inherited it would be interesting to know from whence it is derived.

It is shared equally by boys who dwell far from the sea and those who live on the coast. My small son, for instance, when barely four was deeply offended because I declined to buy him one of the Belle Steamers which was embarking passengers at Southwold Pier, and only the other day when I asked him what he would best like to have in all the world the answer, "A boat," came pat. And yet the child has been afloat but once in his life, and then only for a few minutes in a dinghy when a baby of a few months old. If this taste is not inherited I am at a loss to know from where he gets it. Anyhow, it pleases me to think that his love of boats has been inherited from his father, for I have been passionately attached to yachts and sailing craft of all descriptions as long as I can remember.

My first boat—or at any rate the first that would float the right side uppermost—was a schooner of some twenty-four inches over all, known to fame as the *Arrow*. I acquired her from a schoolfellow in exchange for a roller skate minus a wheel, a catapult, and a white mouse in a delicate state of health. It might be supposed that I had the best of the bargain, but the *Arrow* at that time was a bare shell, *sans* deck, keel, spars, and sails. As my income amounted to but twopence per week, which as often as not was forfeited for alleged breaches of decorum, my financial condition was usually verging upon bankruptcy. Some little ingenuity and enterprise were therefore called for in fitting out my



new acquisition. Cigar boxes provided the wood for her decks, and to furnish a keel some pieces of condemned lead piping were melted down and run in a mould made in a flower-bed. The spars and rigging presented but little difficulty, but I must confess that the sails were something of a problem. However, with the aid of my mother's sewing machine, and certain garments purloined from my sister's wardrobe, I contrived to make a very presentable suit.

I rigged her after the style of the schooner *America* of which I found a spirited picture in the *Illustrated London News* of 1851, and when completed she was a rakish-looking craft. A pennyworth of Brunswick black applied to the topsides imparted a gloss that was much admired, and a number of small brass cannon on her deck converted her into the slaver of my dreams. At the fore she carried the Union Jack, but at the main she flew the Jolly Roger, a somewhat incongruous combination that I found very pleasing. The trial trip was highly successful, and after I had got the weights on the balance-rudder correctly adjusted the boat sailed like a witch. The *Arrow*, in fact, was soon recognised as the champion of the Whitestone Pond at Hampstead.

These waters, better known perhaps as the Horse Pond, were not a particularly favourable venue for model yacht sailing, for at either end, where the road entered and left the pond, there was little water and much mud. The *Arrow* frequently grounded there far out of reach, a

mishap that entailed wading in after her, to the detriment of my nether garments. This led to sad trouble at home and caused those in authority to look askance at my boat-sailing expeditions. Moreover, the pond was a favourite haunt of tradesmen's boys, who not infrequently beguiled the shining hour by throwing stones and mud at the boats as they approached the shore. No owner of spirit could be expected to brook such treatment and more than once I was involved in personal combat. And so it came about that in course of time I became heartily sick of the inconveniences of the Whitestone Pond, and having beaten all the other boats I, like Alexander, sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

Obsessed with the idea of trying conclusions with the cracks of the Round Pond, I one day, greatly daring, smuggled the *Arrow* out of the house and playing truant from school trudged all the way to Kensington. Never was adventure fraught with such grievous disaster. On her very first course the *Arrow* rammed the "pepper-box," a large perforated overflow pipe, in which her bowsprit became firmly fixed. There she lay far from the shore with miniature seas breaking over her decks. For hours I made futile attempts to free her by throwing stones, and all the time she was slowly filling through a leaky hatchway. The end was something of the suddenest. A well-directed stone hit her fairly amidships and drove her clear of the obstruction. But the shout of joy I was preparing to utter was strangled in my

throat, for the boat suddenly hove up her bows and foundered stern first.

There were those who laughed when the *Arrow* went down, but to me, her owner, it was a heart-breaking tragedy, of which, after five-and-thirty years, I still retain a vivid recollection. And I have not altogether forgotten the reception I had from an indignant parent when I returned home hungry and weary; but over that it is perhaps as well to draw a veil.



## CHAPTER II

### MY FIRST BOAT

A YOUNGSTER fresh from a public school and on the threshold of a business career seldom has a superfluity of cash. He earns but little, and his parents, if wise, do not add materially to his scanty salary; for it is good for the young to learn the value of money. That, at least, was the opinion of my own people, and when I came to leave school I realised that, if I wanted a boat, I should have to save up to buy one. And I wanted a boat very badly; so much so indeed that I was prepared to go to considerable lengths in the way of self-sacrifice to obtain one.

My economies were of the most rigid description. I not infrequently lunched at a tea-shop off a glass of milk and a "workhouse." For the benefit of the uninitiated it may be explained that a "workhouse" is a huge wedge of cake of the plainest and cheapest description, which officially, I believe, enjoys the courtesy title of lunch cake. Sometimes I even dispensed with lunch altogether, resting content with a pipe and a look over London Bridge. By such methods of thrift I in course of time accumulated a little pile of sovereigns, and at last there dawned a day when I felt justified in buying my first boat.

One might think that, given the money, the purchase of a boat was the easiest thing in the world, but I soon found that that was not the case. I also learnt, whilst engaged upon the quest, that things are not always what they seem. For example, what could have sounded more promising than the following advertisement: "For sale, 12-ft. centre-board dinghy with lugsail, nearly new; very fast and handy; £10; owner buying a larger"?

The very thing, I thought, and spent the rest of the week in a state of feverish anxiety lest the bargain should be snapped up ere I could get down to Surbiton to inspect it. A nearly new 12-ft. sailing dinghy for £10. What a stroke of luck if I could only secure her!

As I journeyed to Surbiton the following Saturday afternoon, I wondered what she would be like. In moments of optimism my imagination soared to the giddy heights of mahogany and carvel building, white gratings, and rep cushions; at the worst I did not anticipate anything less than a nicely finished boat of spruce or pine in good condition, for did not the advertisement say that she was nearly new?

Arriving at the boathouse indicated in the advertisement, I explained that I had called to see the dinghy advertised for sale by Mr. Jones.

"Where's that boat of Mr. Jones's, Bill?" shouted the man to his mate, who was engaged in varnishing a skiff.

"I believe she's in the corner of the yard behind the *Hyacinth*," was the reply.

I was led across an untidy yard at the back of the premises which seemed to be tenanted by numerous old craft in various stages of disintegration. Hidden from view by the remains of a half-demolished steam launch, which appeared to be the *Hyacinth*, we found Mr. Jones's dinghy, and a single glance sufficed to shatter my hopes. She was a tubby old boat that had at one time been painted red, but was now for the most part coated with green mould. On her transom could just be deciphered the name *Fat Boy*.

"That can't be the boat," I protested. "The advertisement says that she is nearly new," and I pulled the paper from my pocket and handed it to the man.

"Oh, I expect he means that the sail is nearly new," was the reply, "She's got a tidy sail. Anyhow, that's Mr. Jones's boat right enough."

"Well, Mr. Jones can keep her, so far as I am concerned," I remarked and stalked away in high dudgeon, as they say in the novelettes.

I was bitterly disappointed and not a little indignant; but I had come out to buy a boat and if there was one for sale in the district at anything like my price, I was determined that I would go home an owner that evening. Walking down the towpath I called at every yard I came to, but met with no luck. Nobody seemed to have a centre-plate dinghy for sale. Having visited all the boat-building yards at Kingston I was on the point of abandoning my quest when I observed another yard on the opposite bank by the



bridge. Ten minutes later I was interviewing Mr. Tooley.

My search was over. Within a quarter of an hour I had become the owner of a clench-built elm dinghy with a big balance-lug. She seemed in excellent condition and required nothing more than a coat of paint and varnish which Tooley agreed to put on for a sovereign and have her ready for me by the following Saturday afternoon.

The week that intervened between the purchase and taking over of my first boat was the longest I can remember, but fortunately I happened upon an old schoolfellow, one Anthony, and was able to beguile the time by talking about my new purchase. Anthony was a yachtsman, part owner of a cutter which sailed the waters of the Thames Estuary, and he gave me a lot of instruction in the course of the week, finally promising to come down and put me into the way of it when I took my boat out for her trial trip.

When the eventful Saturday arrived the weather was not all that could be desired for open boat sailing. It was the month of February and the river was in flood. There was, moreover, a strong treacherous wind from the south-west, but nothing daunted we travelled down to Kingston.

The boat was ready, but not in the water, as Tooley did not think we should come in such weather. However, it was the work of only a few minutes to launch her, and we then prepared to defy the elements. The sail, when brought out, seemed enormous for such a small boat, and Tooley's

suggestion that we should reef it struck me as eminently sensible. But Anthony, the yachtsman, with a supercilious smile brushed the proposal aside, and proceeded to bend on the halyard. Now, that sail was the boat's racing lug and had an area of something like 150 square feet. No wonder Tooley and his men "downed tools" and lined up on the bank to see the fun.

When all was ready we took our places: Anthony at the tiller and myself seated on the floor-boards. Willing hands pushed us off, and as we shot out from among the boats moored to the bank, Anthony gathered in the sheet. For the moment there was a lull in the breeze, and, almost becalmed, we glided slowly out into mid-river. Suddenly we were struck by a vicious gust, and the greater part of the lee-side of the dinghy disappeared beneath the water. An expert boat sailor could have saved the situation even then, but Anthony was a yachtsman, and those who go down to the sea in five-tonners are not necessarily skilled in the art of handling open boats. In less time than it takes to write the dinghy had foundered, leaving two hapless wights, attired in overcoats and felt hats, swimming in mid-stream.

We were both pretty good swimmers and the adventure was not fraught with much danger. Nevertheless, swimming in heavy clothing is not altogether pleasant, particularly in the month of February; but the crowd that had collected on Kingston Bridge seemed to enjoy the performance more than a little. We landed in somebody's

garden a quarter of a mile lower down and trotted back to the boathouse with the water squelching from our boots. Tooley met us with a sort of "told you so" look in his eye, but was good enough to lend us some old clothes. The garments were few in number and chiefly noticeable for a lack of buttons, but they served the purpose.

In the meantime, two of his men had gone off to raise the wreck, an operation that did not promise much difficulty as the masthead was showing above water. It did not, however, prove quite such a simple matter as we anticipated, for the boat was ballasted with two 56-lb. weights lashed together with a strap. The salvage party was soon joined by a man in a skiff, who had put out from Turk's boathouse on the other side of the river, and between them they contrived to lift her until the bow showed above water. But then, owing to a misunderstanding, she slipped from their grasp and disappeared again below the surface. So did the man from Turk's, who took a header out of his skiff. He came up gasping, and as he climbed into his boat we heard him say, "Is this your boat? Well, you can take 'er; I've 'ad enough." And without another word he pulled lustily for the shore.

Then Tooley himself, with another of his men, went off, and between the four of them they soon lifted the wrecked dinghy and towed her ashore. The boat was a sorry sight. She was plastered with mud inside and her new paint badly scratched, but with the exception of a stretcher none of her



gear was missing. Anthony suggested venturing afloat again, but I thought he had "put me into the way of it" quite enough for one afternoon and declined. So we decided to return home, and having arranged with Tooley to have the boat repainted during the coming week, prepared to take our departure.

To wear our own clothes was out of the question, and we had no alternative but to make shift with those Tooley had lent us. With the aid of sundry pins cunningly placed, the decencies were preserved, but there was no getting away from the fact that we looked rather like a pair of tramps down on their luck. With coat collars turned up to disguise the absence of shirts and collars, we made our way to the station, each carrying a huge brown-paper parcel, from the corners of which water dripped suspiciously. Fortune favoured us in so far that we had an empty carriage all the way to London, but on arrival at Waterloo our luck deserted us. We were stopped at the barrier for our tickets. Oh horror! We had left them in the pockets of our own clothes in company with our money. There was nothing for it but to unpack our parcels, which we accordingly did on the platform. At first the spectators were comparatively few in number, but the British public soon scents a free show, and in next to no time we were the centre of a considerable crowd.

The tickets, somewhat pulpy but still legible, were found and surrendered and then we had to pack up our luggage again. Have you ever tried

to pack a lot of sodden clothes in brown paper that is in the last stages of disintegration? If you have not, take my advice and don't; or at any rate do not select a platform of a great London terminus as the scene of operations. As, with feverish haste, we endeavoured to draw the wet paper together, great pieces tore away until we were left with little more than the string.

There is a limit to human endurance and with us that limit was soon reached. Grabbing our clothes up in our arms we slunk away, followed by the ribald laughter of the idle crowd. We made the rest of our journey home in the privacy of what is, or used to be, vulgarly termed a "growler," but which in our eyes was a heaven-sent haven of refuge.

After that ill-fated trip I came to the conclusion that if my self-appointed instructor was going to make a practice of putting me "in the ditch," I could get there very well unaided, and so I resolved to learn how to handle a dinghy by myself. Week after week I spent my Saturday afternoons afloat on Teddington Reach and, strange to say, met with no further misadventure. But all the same I had many close shaves of capsizing, and it was probably by luck rather than judgment that I contrived to keep the boat right side up. Every time the dinghy heeled to a puff of wind, my heart went into my mouth, as the saying goes, and it was altogether a nerve-racking business. Did I enjoy myself? I suppose I must have done or I should not have persevered. But I

am inclined to think that the enjoyment must have been somewhat akin to that of Mr. Malthus of the Suicide Club, for if the stakes for which I played were not so high there was the same thrill of danger courted and averted. "Fear is the strong passion; it is with fear that you must trifle if you wish to taste the intensest joys of living," said Mr. Malthus to Colonel Geraldine, and I rather think there is an element of truth in the remark. Are not our finest and most fascinating sports those which are flavoured with the spice of personal risk?

But familiarity breeds contempt and I gradually became accustomed to the sensation of the boat listing over under the weight of the sudden puffs of wind which are a characteristic of the upper reaches of the Thames. Moreover, I began to handle my boat with some degree of confidence and the thrills became few and far between. Strange to say, when I reached this stage of my sailing education, I lost interest in navigating the waters of Teddington Reach and began to pine for adventures further afield.





## CHAPTER III

### MULTUM IN PARVO

"I SAY, old man," said Anthony, "if you have nothing on at Easter come away with us in the *Tiercel*. She's lying at Hole Haven, and we are going for a trip to Ramsgate and back."

Being rather tired of sailing about Teddington Reach in a dinghy, I accepted my friend's invitation eagerly. Anthony was for ever singing the praises of the *Tiercel*, which he owned in conjunction with one or two friends, and I was anxious to see the paragon. Moreover, having had no experience of anything but small boat sailing "above bridges," the idea of a cruise in a real yacht was particularly attractive to me, and I literally counted the days to Easter.

When the time came I met Anthony by appointment and he carried me off to a small restaurant in Soho to dine with "some of the other chaps." This restaurant, if unpretentious in appearance, was certainly cheap, for we had a *table d'hôte* dinner of many courses for eighteenpence a head, inclusive of wine. The fish course, I remember, bore a strong family likeness to the homely bloater, and the wine was—well, none but an analytical chemist could say exactly what it was. Before the meal

was over our party numbered five, and it was with some little surprise that I learnt they were all coming away in the *Tiercel*. It was pretty evident that I had formed a quite erroneous impression of the size and accommodation of a five-tonner. She must be a fine big boat, I thought, and looked forward to the trip with enhanced pleasure.

After dinner we proceeded to Fenchurch Street Station, where we found two more enthusiastic yachtsmen awaiting us, and, just as the train was on the point of departure, still another put in an appearance. Our party of eight just about filled a compartment, and we started our journey in the highest of spirits. From the conversation of my companions I gathered that one Harrison had missed the train, but was sure to come on by the next. Nine in a five-tonner! Why, it seemed absurd on the face of it. Hang it all, I said to myself, this must be quite a big vessel, and I came to the conclusion that I must have misunderstood what Anthony had told me about her size.

As we proceeded in leisurely fashion to Benfleet the question of Harrison catching the next train was discussed with an anxiety that bordered upon the feverish. Turning to Anthony I remarked, "This chap Harrison seems to be a very popular member of your crew." "Why, hang it, man, he's got all the grub," was the reply. He explained that Harrison had been commissioned to buy the necessary stores for the trip and bring them down with him. If he failed to turn up it was evident that we should go hungry. From that moment, I may

say, my interest in the missing Harrison was as keen as that of any member of the party.

On reaching Benfleet we were faced with another disappointment. A new stove, ordered in anticipation of the trip, had not arrived, and consternation was depicted upon every face as we crowded round the station-master. The last goods train of the day was, we learnt, due in about an hour, and there was just a chance that the stove might come by that. "Anyhow," said the skipper, "we can't do without it, and so we had better go up to the inn and wait."

We therefore adjourned to the inn and took possession of the bar parlour, with the exception of two members of the crew, who were sent into the town to lay in a stock of bread.

About 10.30 p.m. the truant Harrison pushed open the door of the room. "I thought I should find you chaps here," he remarked by way of greeting.

"Where's the grub?" we shouted in chorus.

"Oh, that's all right. I've left it at the station. And the stove's just arrived."

With nothing to detain us we prepared to move on to Hole Haven, which, I was told, was on the other side of Canvey Island some three miles distant. When the tide is out carts can cross the creek to the island, but unfortunately on this occasion the water was too high, and so there was no alternative but to walk and carry our luggage as best we could. A three-mile walk in itself is no particular hardship, but it is quite another story



when one has to carry two heavy packing-cases, a number of bags, and nine loaves.

Although on the threshold of the month of April it was freezing hard, and we shivered with cold as we stood on the bank waiting for the ferry boat. As the flat-bottomed punt that served as ferry boat would not accommodate us all, we had to make two trips. The Stygian waters of the muddy creek had a most forbidding appearance as we ventured out from the shore, and the Charon who rowed us over looked askance at the heavy load we piled into the boat. The punt's freeboard was reduced to something like two inches, and I firmly believe that had any one coughed we should have capsized. I frankly confess that it was with feelings of unspeakable relief that I stood upon firm ground again.

When we were all over, Harrison was sent on ahead to get the dinghy ready. He was comparatively fortunate, having nothing to carry but a couple of bags and a few loaves. The rest of us were divided up into two parties of four each, the remainder of the luggage being split up between us. Each party carried a case on their shoulders, the rest of the things being piled on top. In the uncertain light our procession might easily have been mistaken for a double funeral, and long ere we reached our destination our spirits were attuned to such a ceremony. Oh, that ghastly walk! My shoulders ache now at the mere thought of it. When we arrived at the Haven we were met by Harrison with the intelligence that the dinghy leaked like an old basket, but that he had borrowed

(without permission, I strongly suspect) a fine big boat that would take the whole crowd, luggage and all. He had, however, failed to procure any coal as the inn was shut.

“Oh, well, we must do without,” said the skipper, “we can break up the cases for fuel. We must get away at once if we are going out this ebb.”

So, without further parley, we embarked in the borrowed boat and put off to the yacht. If I had been surprised before I was destined to be more so now. The *Tiercel* proved to be an old converted ship's boat of some thirty feet in length.

“Good Heavens, old man,” I exclaimed to Anthony, “where are we all going to sleep?”

“We don't do much sleeping aboard this packet,” was the ominous reply. And when I looked round at the crowd struggling to get into the little kennel that purported to be a cabin, I cannot say that I was altogether surprised at the information.

One of the crew, a fellow named Leslie, was then sent back with the borrowed boat, receiving instructions to return with the *Tiercel's* own dinghy, which was lying at the causeway. After a prolonged absence we heard him returning, and from sundry remarks wafted across the water gathered that all was not well with him. As has already been hinted, the condition of the *Tiercel's* dinghy left a good deal to be desired. As a cullender it might have served a useful purpose, but as a dinghy it was of no account at all. In fact it filled and rolled over just as the unfortunate Leslie stretched out an eager hand to grasp the *Tiercel*, and his

remarks anent dinghies in general and that of the *Tiercel* in particular, as we pulled him on board, were fluent and to the point.

This diversion was hardly over when the skipper discovered that the rudder was unshipped, and he also began to say things in the vulgar tongue—I don't think I ever heard a more vulgar—and there was certainly some excuse for annoyance. We were anxious to take the last of the ebb across to Queenborough with the idea of working through the Swale on the young flood, and here we lay crippled, what time the favourable tide was running away from us.

"Some one must go overboard and ship it," said the skipper with decision.

There was no response.

"Here, Leslie, you are wet through already and may as well go in again," he suggested.

Leslie politely intimated that he would see the skipper damned first.

"I'd go in myself if I hadn't a weak heart," said the skipper; whereat there was an audible titter, for the skipper never fails to refer to an alleged cardiac affection when there is work to be done.

"Here, I'll go in," said Anthony, commencing to strip off his clothes midst the applause of his companions. A few minutes later he stood on the rail stripped to the buff and shivering in the cold night air whilst he hardened his heart for the plunge. Then he threw up his hands and dived. A moment later his head appeared above water, and with a



sobbing gasp he made a bee-line back to the boat. He also said he would see the skipper damned, and the future of that gentleman began to look rather black.

Anthony's troubles were by no means over, for, on retiring to the cabin to dress, he made the unpleasant discovery that there were no towels on board, an omission to which Leslie had been vainly attempting to draw attention for some time. It may be the custom among the bathers of the Regent's Canal and other fashionable watering-places to use their apparel for drying purposes, but when the garments in question have to be worn immediately afterwards they are apt to leave a damp clammy feeling that is not altogether desirable. For the next hour or two neither Anthony nor Leslie could be classed as a pleasant companion.

After many futile attempts to ship the rudder from the deck, it was decided to defer starting until the following afternoon and a general move was made towards the cabin. I then learnt that the interior of the yacht was even less inviting than the exterior had appeared in the uncertain light. The cabin, in the absence of a fore-bulkhead, was open right through and quite destitute of furniture or fittings. A bunk ran down either side forming seats, but the roof was so low that it was impossible to sit upright. As there were no cushions I could only conclude that her owners made a practice of sleeping upon what Dan Leno used to describe as "pure wood." Water dripped freely from the underside of the deck, and a cheap tin paraffin

lamp with a smoky glass smelt abominably. Into this nauseating den the whole nine of us crowded.

The cases we had brought with us having been opened, the stove was set up in the fo'c'stle. Willing hands chopped up wood, and with the aid of a liberal sprinkling of paraffin a fire was soon kindled. Now, burning the Yule-log at Christmas-time may be all very well, but it does not necessarily follow that the same pleasing effect will be secured when the lid of a packing-case is burnt in a bogey stove that has no chimney. Being neither a ham nor a haddock I discreetly withdrew to the deck, where I was soon joined by a coughing crowd, the opinion being freely expressed that it was better to be frozen than suffocated. Presently one of the party ventured into the cabin with a bucket of water and quenched the fire, and after the smoke had cleared off we retired below again to make preparations for passing the remainder of the night. I say "passing the night" advisedly, for I saw but little prospect of getting any sleep. As I have remarked, there was a sharp frost and the sleeping arrangements of the *Tiercel* left much to be desired. There was insufficient room for all of us to lie down, and bedding was a negligible quantity. Solomon in his wisdom once demonstrated how one baby might be divided between two women, but I fancy he would have been somewhat puzzled if called upon to apportion two diminutive blankets among nine men.

I think I may say without any great departure from the truth that I never passed a more uncom-

fortable night in my life. Sitting huddled up in my overcoat with my chin almost on my knees, I was chilled to the marrow and soon began to feel that dry, prickly sensation all over my body which I have since learnt is peculiar to sleeping in small yachts in the winter. One by one my companions dropped off into a troubled sleep, and most of them snored abominably. Without, the rippling tide splashed against the lands of the clench-built boat, and the plaintive call of a solitary curlew added a mournful note to a situation which in itself was sufficiently desolate.

This Anthony called yachting. I fell a-thinking of the terms of my friend's invitation and of the definition of the word "yacht," which brought to my mind a hackneyed quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*—

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet."

The lines kept running through my head until I dozed off. I awoke at about 7 a.m., with a stiff neck and a vile cold, but only too thankful to see daylight and realise that that ghastly night was over.

Some of the crew were already busy with a key-hole saw cutting a hole in the fore-deck for the stove-pipe, and soon the merry frizzling of bacon heralded the approach of breakfast. If the sleeping accommodation of the *Tiercel* was inadequate the appointments of the table were even more primitive.

In the absence of a table a cloth was not perhaps



required, but I do not think I was unreasonable in expecting such articles of every-day use as knives and forks, plates, cups and saucers. None, however, were forthcoming, the owners of the *Tiercel* apparently preferring to base their table manners upon the old saying that fingers were made before forks. Each man, with the exception of myself, produced from his belt a sheath-knife of piratical dimensions, and as I was a visitor Anthony, with Oriental politeness, permitted me to share his. The bacon was served up hot and frizzling in a huge frying-pan that was not guiltless of rust, whilst the coffee was made in the kettle. The only drinking utensils the syndicate appeared to possess were an old enamelled iron mug and a glass which I am prepared to swear once accommodated a pound of jam. These were passed from hand to hand after the style of the loving-cup at a civic banquet. It might be thought that eating hot bacon without forks would have presented something of a problem. Not a bit of it. These happy-go-lucky yachtsmen were quite content to follow the example of the working man and take their breakfast in the form of a "thumb-piece." As this is a somewhat technical term it may be as well to explain that a "thumb-piece" consists of a slice of meat placed on a hunk of bread, the meat being held in position by the thumb whilst the eater bites off a morsel, varying in dimensions according to his individual fancy and the size of his mouth. When the bacon is scorching hot, and the front teeth not quite what they should be, this method of eating is not to

be recommended, neither is it particularly edifying to watch. "Manners makyth man," says the motto of one of our most famous public schools, and if the adage carries but a modicum of truth, the crew of the *Tiercel* must, I fear, have taken a very low place in the order of manhood.

After breakfast, the yacht having grounded, we shipped the rudder, and then, when the young flood had made sufficiently to float the dinghy, I and two others went off to the inn to get some coke for the stove. It was an exciting trip. Whilst one man pulled, the other two bailed vigorously, but it was all we could do to keep the boat afloat. Fortunately we had taken the precaution to remove our shoes and socks before starting, and with our trousers rolled up managed to keep fairly dry. On arriving at the "Lobster Smack" I seized the opportunity to supplement my scanty breakfast with some bread-and-cheese and a bottle of Bass, which, despite the early hour, were very acceptable. With the additional weight of a sack of coke the return journey was even more perilous than the first, but we had the flood under us and by pulling lustily contrived to reach the *Tiercel* before the dinghy filled.

At high water we got under way with a fine easterly breeze bound for Queenborough, and I had an opportunity of seeing the yacht under sail. She was a disreputable-looking old hooker, sadly in need of a coat of paint, and I cannot say that I was impressed. Her sails, which hung from the spars like old sacks, were very dirty and mildewed

and only fit to make clothing for a scarecrow. The mainsail had two large rents in it in addition to a number of smaller slits. Where there was not a tear there seemed to be a patch, and the general effect was that of an old patchwork quilt rescued from the rubbish heap. The clew of the jib was badly torn, whilst the foresail had a hole in it that a man could have crawled through. In fact, there was so little of the sail left it seemed a farce to set it at all. Years ago a good deal was written in the technical Press on the virtues of perforated sails. Well, I then had a good opportunity of seeing the theory put to a practical test, for it would be difficult to imagine sails more perforated than those of the *Tiercel*, but I failed to appreciate any advantage. In this unpromising craft I made my first venture in tidal waters, and let me say at once that, despite the discomfort, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

There is something peculiarly attractive about the Thames Estuary, and to this day it has a fascination for me that I find irresistible. A beat to windward down Sea Reach on the ebb with a fresh easterly breeze is most exhilarating. The swift running tide carries the vessel over the bottom so fast that the weatherliness of almost any craft is flattered, and as one steers her through the jabble of sea knocked up by the weather-going tide one feels that it is good to be alive.

Viewed from the deck of a passing vessel the *Tiercel* must have somewhat resembled a box of sardines with the heads sticking out. Five of the



crew were in the well, two more seated on the cabin-top, whilst two looked out from the fore-hatch. Nevertheless, we had a slashing sail to Queenborough, where we brought up close to the hard. Feeling unequal to passing another night on board, I and three others went ashore and put up at an inn, where we foregathered with some other yachtsmen and spent a very pleasant evening.

The next morning on going on board we found the men who had stuck to the ship busy carpentering. It appeared that the stove had set the fore-deck on fire, burning a good-sized hole in it and loosening the bowsprit bitts. After the damage had been temporarily repaired, we started with a strong wind to run through the Swale to Faversham Creek. There are many mud flats in the Swale, and I think we "found" them all. Fortunately we had the flood under us, and always got afloat again without much delay. Getting through the railway bridge was a somewhat exciting episode, as the man in charge of it only opened a gap of a few feet for our topmast. More by luck than judgment we managed to squirm through, and reached our destination without further incident. We anchored in the mouth of Faversham Creek, and two of the crew went off in the dinghy to borrow a big boat in which we could all go ashore, as every one by this time had had enough of sleeping on board.

The tide was ebbing, and by the time they returned we were high and dry. As the boat grounded several yards from the *Tiercel* I borrowed Anthony's sea boots to wade through the mud,

Now Anthony was in the front row when feet were served out, and his boots were large policeman's size. Their generous proportions were my undoing. The mud of Faversham Creek is about the softest to be found anywhere in the neighbourhood of the Thames Estuary, and when I stepped overboard I sank in up to my knees. Attempting to pull one foot out I found that I was leaving the boot behind, and in my struggles to retain it, fell forward on to my face. The more I struggled to get up the worse my plight, and in a few seconds I was plastered from head to foot with black slimy mud. And I had just changed into my shore clothes. I am inclined to think that La Rochefoucauld was not far wrong when he made his famous remark to the effect that "there is something not altogether displeasing in viewing the misfortunes of our friends." My companions simply howled with laughter, and several minutes elapsed ere they were in fit condition to extricate me from my unsavoury bed. Eventually, however, they dragged me out and took me ashore, a picture of woe. At the inn I borrowed some clothes to wear whilst my own were being dried and cleaned, and then we sat down to tea.

In the golden days of youth misadventures are speedily forgotten, and long before the meal was finished I had quite recovered my spirits. The landlord of the inn had told us of a local smack that was for sale, and it was decided to go and see the boat next day with a view to purchase. Ways and means were eagerly discussed. As she was a

craft of some five-and-twenty tons it was the general opinion that the syndicate must add to their number and I agreed to become a member if the deal went through. It was nearly midnight ere we thought of turning in, and then a fresh difficulty arose. There was only one room available, and how were nine men to sleep in one bed? We solved the problem by drawing lots. Four slept in the bed, four on the floor, and one on the stairs. The last mentioned, being late to come up, was locked out, some one remarking that it was not healthy for too many to sleep in a room.

The next morning we awoke to find it blowing a gale, and as we were hot on the scent of a new boat, we decided to spend the morning in looking over this craft and then abandon our cruise and go by train to Margate for the remainder of the holiday. Leaving the *Tiercel* in the care of the landlord of the inn, we carried out this programme, and so ended my first trip in tidal waters.



## CHAPTER IV

### PILED UP

WE called her a yacht, but I am now rather inclined to think that the title was something of a courtesy one, for she was, in fact, an old smack built in the early days of the last century. However, she had been bought with hard-earned money, and if it was our pleasure to call her a yacht it concerned nobody but ourselves. The *Five Sisters*, of Faversham, had laboured for upwards of eighty years over the oyster beds at Whitstable, and her owner accepted our offer of £35 with a haste that might almost be described as unseemly. But she would float and had her full complement of gear, and thirty shillings a ton can hardly be considered an extravagant price to pay for a yacht. Split up amongst the nine of us it did not amount to much apiece, but nevertheless it strained our financial resources to the verge of breaking point, and whenever any money was subsequently required for repairs, we had to invite somebody to join the board after allotment, as they say in company-promoting circles. In course of time the syndicate grew to such dimensions that it was found desirable to split the members up into two divisions, as the cabin was apt to get a little close before morning if occupied by more than a dozen at a time.

We bought the *Five Sisters* in December, and it was arranged that a party of us should go down to Faversham at Christmas to sail her round to Hole Haven, where we proposed to station her. Christmas fell on a Thursday that year, and with four clear days before us we journeyed down to Faversham on the Wednesday evening. We expected to find the *Five Sisters* afloat and ready for sea, but on our arrival, late in the evening, discovered her lying on the mud, and all her ballast, some ten tons of scrap iron, stored in a shed. To do anything that night was out of the question, and so we decided to sleep ashore, being accommodated with difficulty—for there were nine of us—at an inn near the creek.

On Christmas morning, after an early breakfast, we commenced to get the ballast on board. Had we been possessed of a fair measure of sense we should have waited until there was sufficient water to float the smack alongside the sea-wall, but that would have entailed missing a tide and the sacrifice of a day of our all too short holiday. And so we determined to carry the ballast piece by piece across the mud. The fisherman from whom we had bought the boat procured for us the loan of three wheelbarrows, and in these we transferred the iron from the shed to the sea-wall. This was all plain sailing, but then the real troubles of transport commenced. Between the shore and the *Five Sisters* lay an expanse of soft mud some twenty yards wide, across which the ballast had to be carried by hand. Four of the party, being unlucky, were equipped with sea-boots, and this duty naturally fell to

them. To walk in the slimy ooze of a tidal creek is at the best of times no easy matter, but when hampered with a burden of some half hundred-weight of scrap iron in a basket, the task assumed herculean proportions. Those who had no sea-boots removed their nether garments and waded out to the boat, having been told off to stow the ballast as received. Then the booted brigade commenced a mud-larking performance that was destined to last for some hours. The news that a free show was in progress was soon carried into the town, and in a short time the sea-wall was black with people, who roared with laughter every time some hapless wight slipped and dropped his load in the mud. Many a pig of iron was lost in this way, but we stuck doggedly to our task, and by three o'clock in the afternoon the ballast was all on board, and stowed beneath the floor-boards.

The vessel was now afloat and straining at her anchor, and as we had but little daylight before us, no time was lost in making sail. We had engaged a smacksman to pilot us down the creek, and under his direction set the whole mainsail, although there was a hard wind from the north-east. Presently we were roaring down the creek with lee decks awash, four of us working the headsail sheets whilst the others busied themselves with cleaning out the hold that was to be our saloon. The tide was ebbing hard, and had we touched we should have probably remained aground until the following afternoon. But our pilot handled the old smack to perfection, and brought us to a safe anchorage



at the mouth of the creek just as the shades of night were closing in.

After the pilot had been put ashore we commenced to prepare our dinner, which consisted of the orthodox turkey and Christmas pudding. To cook a good-sized turkey in a frying-pan over a Primus stove is something in the nature of a feat, but it was successfully accomplished. It was obvious that the bird could not be cooked in its natural state, but after some grisly work with a jack-knife the limbs and most of the flesh were transferred to the big pan, whilst the carcass was hove overboard for the entertainment of the crabs. Surrounded by a necklace of sausages and with rashers of bacon laid lovingly on top, the bird was cooked to a turn; and after the lapse of well-nigh twenty years that turkey lives in my memory as the best I have ever helped to eat.

The crew of the *Five Sisters* at dinner must have presented a strange sight. The cabin (*anglicè* hold) was destitute of furniture, and we sat about in *négligé* costume upon the boards that still bore more than a trace of mud and rust. Our amateur skipper, by virtue of his office, sat upon an inverted bucket and presided over the feast, endeavouring to apportion the contents of the pan with fairness and impartiality. A smoky hurricane lantern suspended from the roof cast a sickly glare over the scene. As the smack was rolling heavily, a boot had been attached to the lantern to steady it, and this boot was surreptitiously used as an ash-tray by various members of the crew, to the subsequent

annoyance of the owner. Without, the night was black as pitch, and, as the vessel rolled in the Stygian waters, blocks clattered together and halliards played a devil's tattoo against the mast. The plaintive cry of plover and curlew, wafted across the waters, added a note of melancholy to the surroundings, but in no wise disturbed the revels in the "saloon." It was at a late hour when, rolled in blankets, we courted slumber upon the hard boards.

We turned out in the morning to find that the smack had dragged her anchor during the night, and was hard and fast upon a mud flat. The tide was ebbing, and as there was no prospect of getting her off before noon, we dallied with our breakfast, and then went ashore in the dinghy—a 17-ft. boat that would easily accommodate the whole party. The wind had died away almost completely, and ere we returned a thick mist had settled over the Swale. We had laid out the anchor before going ashore and when we came back the *Five Sisters* was afloat. The weather conditions were anything but promising, but as the light breeze was fair, our skipper, despite the fog, decided to make a start for Hole Haven. With a big club-headed topsail aloft and the balloon foresail boomed out as a spinnaker, we managed to crawl over the flood, and, steering by compass, proceeded down the Swale.

Leaving a couple of hands on deck to work the ship, the rest of us went below for lunch. But our meal was doomed to postponement, for we had hardly sat down when an agonised yell from the



deck caused us to drop our enamelled iron plates with a clatter and make a wild dash for the hatch. There, within a few feet of our bowsprit end, was the coastguard vessel *Cadmus* looming up out of the fog. Fortunately we struck her a sidelong blow and but little damage resulted. But the smack's boom dragged along the vessel's side from stem to stern, and there was a crash of breaking glass as it encountered some windows in its passage. A momentary glimpse of excited bluejackets running along her deck, and the *Cadmus* was enshrouded once more in a mantle of mist. This incident was followed by a heated argument as to whether we should bring up or continue our trip; but as we had already wasted a good deal of time the majority were in favour of going on. This point having been decided, we returned to our belated lunch, and it was after two o'clock when we relieved the watch on deck.

Whilst we had been below the fog had increased in density, and it was now as thick as a hedge. We reckoned that we were somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Columbine Sand—treacherous waters in thick weather—but with the confidence of youth we kept on our course. Prudence certainly suggested having the lead, but a search through the vessel failed to produce such an implement, and so we trusted to luck to keep us clear of the sands. The wind had fallen light again, and, as progress was very slow, most of the party retired to the hold to play cards. Suddenly there was an ominous scrunch beneath the vessel's keel, and a moment



later the dinghy charged into her stern. The *Five Sisters* was hard and fast ashore on some sandbank unknown. At first we thought but little of this, as it was quite calm, and a sandbank out of the way of passing traffic seemed a particularly safe resting-place in a thick fog. But as it was just about high water it was evident that we should be booked to stay for the best part of twelve hours unless we could refloat her at once. With much labour the heavy bower anchor and chain were lowered into the dinghy and laid out in the direction that promised to yield most water, although the bottom seemed very flat. But when we hove lustily on the windlass bars the anchor came home without moving the smack. As she had already taken a pronounced list it was useless to try again, so we all went below to tea.

Whilst thus occupied it occurred to some one that the tides must be taking off, and a brief study of the Nautical Almanac disclosed the horrible fact that the next tide would be more than a foot less than the one upon which we had taken the ground. The discovery filled us with dismay, for there seemed every chance of the *Five Sisters* being neaped for ten days or more. The prospect was certainly not alluring. We were due back in town on Monday morning at the latest, and had already made considerable inroads into our stock of provisions.

"We must lighten the boat at once," said the skipper with decision, and sick at heart we set about the job.

It was quite dark, and the work had to be carried





“The work had to be carried on by the uncertain light of the hurricane lantern.”

[To face page 37.]



on by the uncertain light of the hurricane lantern in the hold and the riding light slung in the rigging. Having prised up the floor-boards and secured the dinghy alongside the smack, we proceeded to transfer pigs of slimy rust-covered ballast from the hold to the boat. As each pig had to be lifted some five feet on to the deck and then gently lowered into the dinghy, it was slow and back-breaking work, and long ere the boat was fully laden we wished we had never seen the *Five Sisters* of Faversham. After several hours' hard labour we desisted, having put as much weight into the dinghy as we considered prudent.

When the tide had ebbed away and the smack lay high and dry, we carried out the anchor and buried it in the sand. Nothing more could be done until high water at 4.30 a.m. the following day, and the waiting was perhaps the worst part of the whole business. Our "saloon" was no longer habitable, as the floor-boards were up and evil-smelling water lay deep in the bilge of the heavily listing vessel. It was bitterly cold and the fog damp and clammy, whilst the syrens of passing steamers added a note of melancholy that got upon one's nerves. By mutual consent we retired to the fo'c'stle, all nine of us crowding into a space that was intended to accommodate two, or three at the most. Packed like sardines in a tin, there was barely room to move, and the indescribable odour of paraffin cum stale bilge-water was nauseating. When to this was added the smoke from many pipes, the atmosphere of the fo'c'stle became intolerable, and soon drove

us out on deck again. Time seemed to stand still, but there is an end to most things in this world and slowly the night wore away.

In the early hours of the morning the water once more lapped the keel of the smack, and at about 3.30 a.m. she gave a sudden jerk and stood upright. According to the table the tide should be at its best at 4.30 a.m., and about a quarter of an hour before we began to heave on the windlass. Link by link the cable came over the bow, but still the *Five Sisters* did not move. All hands strained at the bars with all their weight and strength and the chain was stretched as taut as a bar of iron, but the smack did not budge. Then, when hope had almost deserted us, the pawls of the windlass began to sing clank! clank! clank! and we felt the vessel move beneath our feet. Lord! how we toiled and sweated. Presently we unshipped the bars and, tailing on to the chain, brought it home hand over fist. Then shipping the bars once more, we gave a mighty heave and tore the anchor from its bed.

The *Five Sisters* of Faversham was afloat and under way once more, and we hastily set the fore-sail to woo the light air that came from the westward. Improvising a hand lead from a piece of ballast and a rope, we felt our way into deep water and then anchored to await the dawn.

As it began to grow light the fog dispersed and we found ourselves off the Isle of Sheppey, but as we could not make any progress until the tide began to flood again, we re-stowed the ballast, and, having

made our saloon habitable once more, turned in to snatch a few hours' sleep.

We resumed our voyage at eleven o'clock, when the weather was clear and a nice breeze blowing from south-west. Gradually we won our way into the deep waters of the Thames and beat up to Hole Haven without further misadventure. But for the time being we were quite out of conceit with our "yacht," and, leaving her in charge of the caretaker of a powder hulk, we walked to Benfleet and caught the last train up to town.





## CHAPTER V

### A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS

THE morning was certainly not an inviting one from a sailing point of view, as there was a strong breeze accompanied by a mizzle of rain. The black, threatening clouds hung low in the heavens, and vicious squalls came at frequent intervals out of the south-west. The *Five Sisters*, however, lay snugly at her moorings in Hole Haven, and more than one of her crew thought she had better remain there. But, as some one remarked: "What is the use of having a boat that *is* a boat if you do not use her? Why," he added, "this is just the day for the old *Sisters*, and we shall be able to show the fancy yachts something."

The *Five Sisters*, of Faversham, was an old bawley boat of some 25 tons measurement which had been built in the early days of the last century. We had formed a syndicate of nine to buy her, and she had passed into our ownership for the sum of £35, which included a 17-ft. boat in excellent condition. At first we slept in the hold, which was neither sweet nor dry, as the rain percolated through the hatches, but as soon as our financial resources permitted we converted the

hold into a large saloon. The appointments of this apartment were of the type usually termed severe. A wide bunk, guiltless of cushions, ran down either side, and in the centre was a large deal table surrounded by benches. At the forward end of the cabin we had installed a large cooking-range with two ovens, which had been picked up for the proverbial old song.

The *Five Sisters* leaked more than a little, and was as slow as a hearse in anything short of half a gale, and as most of the block sheaves were blind, the gear was uncommonly heavy to handle. The capstan had to be pressed into service when setting the heavy dressed mainsail, whilst most of the crew had to go aloft and sit on the gaff when we wanted to lower the sail.

We were all youngsters under twenty, with the exception of our amateur skipper, who, being on the wrong side of thirty, we regarded as quite elderly. Having had a good deal more experience of sailing than any of us, and being, moreover, a heavy-weight boxer of some repute, no one questioned his right to the post he had assumed as a matter of course. His was a foreman's job, for, beyond ordering the rest of us about, he did practically no work at all. The navigation of the ship, however, fell to him, and we soon had an intimate knowledge of the various mudflats and sandbanks which abound in the Thames Estuary, having spent a good many hours aground on most of them. Taking it all round, however, we had a good deal of fun for our money.

The skipper having given his casting vote in favour of getting under way, there was nothing further to be said; so, pulling down a pair of reefs in the mainsail, we slipped our moorings, and with half a gale of wind on the beam the old boat roared along towards Sea Reach, with her covering-board well awash. As the flood was making, we decided to go up river, and on clearing the bar all hands got on to the sheets to bring the *Five Sisters* to the wind for the beat up Sea Reach. Feeling the full force of the vicious squalls, the old bawley heeled over until her lee decks were buried deep beneath the seething waters. Every time she punched into a head sea she staggered and trembled from truck to keel, whilst blinding showers of spray flew aft and cut our faces like flails. But it was grand sailing, and even those who had advocated remaining in Hole Haven soon admitted that they would not have missed it for worlds. The strong flood tide under the bawley's keel flattered her weatherliness, and she seemed to fly past the objects ashore. It was a broad reach through the Lower Hope, and with sheets checked the old boat was at her best. We gradually overhauled a little fleet of stumpy barges, and were highly elated at passing them, as it was very seldom indeed that the *Five Sisters* came across a craft that she could beat. On a reach in a strong wind the bawley required two hands at her tiller, and sometimes even three, as she was more than a little hard-headed; but for the rest of the crew there was nothing to do on this point



of sailing, so we retired below for a comfortable smoke by the cabin fire. But we were soon called on deck again to get the sheets aboard for the beat through Gravesend Reach. This is one of the busiest reaches in the London river, and that morning was full of craft of all types and nationalities. Several great steamers lay at the mooring buoys off the town, and a large full-rigged ship was proceeding up river in the wake of a pair of fussy little tugs. Numerous small schooners and barquentines, engaged in the coastwise trade, were lying at anchor, whilst many barges, with their mainsails brailed up, threaded their way through the maze of shipping. It was an inspiring sight, and as we wended our way westwards we frequently bore up a little to get a closer view of some interesting craft of commerce.

After passing Northfleet Light we were able to ease the sheets a little and reach up to Grays, from whence we could fetch Greenhithe on the starboard tack. By this time the tide had about done, and we decided to bring up for lunch.

"We will hang on to that buoy," said the skipper, pointing to a large mooring buoy, bobbing about in the tideway near at hand. "We will sail up to it, and one of you can jump on to the buoy with a warp and make fast."

I was the hapless wight told off for this duty, and, standing on the fore-deck with the end of a bass warp in my hand, I stood ready to leap on to the buoy. The skipper sailed the *Sisters* within a few feet of the buoy, and, jumping on to it, I

speedily made fast to the iron ring, nearly losing my balance in the process. But the skipper had misjudged the way the boat carried, and, forging ahead, she snapped the warp as if it were a piece of string, leaving me marooned on a mooring buoy in the middle of St. Clement's Reach. Although the buoy was quite large enough to support me, the strong wind had knocked up a jabble of sea, and I found it anything but a stable resting-place. As it bobbed about it frequently dipped my legs under water, and then the wash from a passing steamer immersed me to the neck. Wet to the skin, and with chattering teeth, I hung on for dear life what time the old bawley was punching about in a vain attempt to pick me up. At last, to my great relief, I saw them anchor, and in a few minutes the boat was sent away to take me off.

As soon as I got on board again I went below to change into dry clothes, and, whilst thus engaged, heard loud exclamations of dismay. I put my head through the skylight to ascertain the cause, and found that our boat—the joy of our hearts—had gone adrift, somebody having made a faulty hitch when securing the painter. Then the skipper shouted, “Get the anchor,” and I hurried on deck to lend a hand. In the meantime a waterman's boat had picked up our gig, and, to our amazement, hoisted a sail and started to tow her down river. Willing hands got the anchor and made sail on the *Sisters*, and, filled with feelings of rage and indignation, we gave chase. Although they had seen the boat go



“Marooned on a mooring buoy in the middle of St. Clement’s Reach.”

[To face page 44.





adrift, they evidently meant to take her to the Receiver of Wrecks at Gravesend with a view to salvage.

Soon the old bawley was roaring along before a fair wind in pursuit; but the quarry had a long start, and it was not until the old Rosherville Gardens were near at hand that we got within measurable distance of the pirates. There were many vessels anchored along the Gravesend shore, and the watermen who had taken our boat, seeing that we were close upon them, commenced to dodge in and out amongst the craft brought up. Nothing daunted, we followed in their wake, and were but thirty yards astern when a violent squall of wind and rain overtook us. Our two helmsmen were quite unable to hold the *Five Sisters*, which took charge and fouled a yacht at anchor. Our bowsprit was making havoc of her rigging, and our skipper leaped on her deck with knife in hand, and hacking away at her running gear, soon cleared the two vessels. As the bawley swung round to the tide her bowsprit swept over a pretty little launch and knocked out the latter's brass funnel, which sank. Then we drifted down on to another launch belonging to a missionary society. When we tried to clear her we found her mooring chain was firmly jammed between our rudder and stern-post, and we were dragging her moorings rapidly down the river.

The men who had seized our boat had in the meantime apparently changed their minds, and decided to return her to us. Coming alongside,

one of the two climbed on board, whilst his mate held their boat alongside the *Sisters*.

“ Well, what do you want ? ” asked our skipper, with an angry glint in his eye.

“ Thought you would give us a trifle for bringing your boat back.”

The skipper did—under the jaw—and the man disappeared head first over the side, landing on his back in their boat.

Dropping our anchor, we at last succeeded in bringing up the bawley and her unwelcome consort, and then we anchored the launch with our kedge and warp. Tired out, and quite out of conceit with our boat and everything connected with her, we went ashore and put up at an hotel. The remainder of the day was passed in interviewing the owners of the damaged property. We had to make good the gear of the yacht which we had cut, replace the missionary launch's moorings, and to pay for a new funnel for the other launch that we had fouled. To crown all, the skipper was called upon to compensate the watermen to the tune of £2 to save a summons for assault.

Taking one thing with another, our little trip up river cost us a pretty penny and the syndicate hovered on the verge of bankruptcy for many a long day.



## CHAPTER VI

### BUYING EXPERIENCE

IN the light of an experience acquired by the purchase of upwards of a score of yachts of all sorts and sizes, I often wonder what could have induced me to buy the *Euryanthe*. I suppose, however, like other novices, I sacrificed my better judgment to inclination, and, yielding to the blandishments of the vendor, became the owner of one of the worst death-traps that ever put to sea on pleasure bent. As a matter of fact, I had no serious thoughts of buying a yacht at that time, but, happening to remark to an acquaintance in a casual sort of way that I wouldn't mind having a little cruiser if I could pick up a bargain, he lured me into the office of a friend who had a boat for sale.

The description I received of the *Euryanthe* was certainly attractive, and the little vessel's euphonious name was as pleasing to the senses as the bouquet of a vintage wine. She was said to be fast, handy, and a splendid sea-boat—was there ever a small yacht offered for sale that was *not* a splendid sea-boat?—as sound as a bell, and as stiff as the proverbial church. Her sails and gear, the vendor declared, were in perfect order, the inventory of the most comprehensive description,

and her internal accommodation superior to that of any yacht of her tonnage afloat. She was lying, ready for sea, in the Gravesend Canal, and the price asked was only £30. Ere I left the office I had consented to go and inspect her the following day.

After some little searching I found the *Euryanthe* surrounded by some dilapidated bawley boats which afforded an effective foil to her shapely lines. She evidently had been recently fitted out, and her shining black topsides, snowy decks, and tall golden spars glistening in the sunlight, quite won my heart. Her dimensions, I gathered from the particulars furnished me by the owner, were: Length over all, 24 ft.; L.W.L., 21 ft.; beam, 6 ft.; and draught, 6 ft. These figures, however, conveyed but little to my mind, as my experience of yachts at that time was a negligible quantity.

Having feasted my eyes on her shapely proportions from various coigns of vantage, I boarded her. The *Euryanthe* had the snuggest little cabin imaginable. There was the usual sofa bunk on each side, a swing table in the centre, and hanging from the roof a lamp with a red silk shade. Over the portholes in the coamings were cunning little curtains of a similar hue, while a strip of carpet on the floor imparted a finishing touch of homeliness. On exploring the lockers and cupboards I discovered that she was extremely well found. There seemed to be everything on board that one could reasonably want, even down to a huge soup-tureen, which I considered superfluous on such

a small craft. In the light of after events, however, I am inclined to think that tureen was one of the most useful items in the vessel's inventory. I was quite delighted with the *Euryanthe*, and ere I went to bed that night she was mine.

I arranged to make my first venture in the cutter on the following Saturday, proposing to sail her down to Hole Haven, where I had decided to station her. Whether I should engage a hand for the trip, or rely solely upon my own efforts, was a much-debated point. Prudence prompted the former, but inclination the latter. My experience of yachts and yachting was distinctly limited. I had certainly taken two or three trips in the Thames Estuary in an old smack owned by a syndicate of which I was a member, but my part had been little more than that of passenger. What little knowledge I had was theoretical rather than practical, having been derived for the most part from studying a handbook on sailing. But it all seemed so simple that I decided to take my courage in both hands and dispense with professional assistance.

On the eventful day, accompanied by a friend, I journeyed to Gravesend to join the *Euryanthe*. Billy had never been yachting before, and evidently regarded me in the light of an expert. Although I had learnt the names of halyards and their uses from my book, I had secret misgivings about setting a cutter's sails for the first time with another person, however uncritical, looking on; so I sent Billy on a shopping expedition whilst I



hastened down to the boat to get her ready. It was well I did so, for I was hardly on board ere the dock-gates were opened.

"If you are going out this tide, sir, you must hurry up," shouted the dock-master. In a moment I was engaged in an unseemly scramble. Working in desperate haste, 'midst shouts from the dock-master and sundry loafers on the bank, I at last moved from my berth, and with mainsail only half set and jib hoisted upside down, made for the entrance. With the wind on the beam it was plain sailing, and save for an unfortunate collision with a smack, that cost me a bowsprit shroud, I got out without misadventure. Then I threw a line to a man on the dock-head and lay moored alongside the wall awaiting my companion. For half a crown, the man who had moored the yacht came on board and temporarily repaired the broken bowsprit shroud. By the time this was done and the sails properly set, Billy had put in an appearance, and the man, having climbed ashore, pushed the *Euryanthe* out into the tideway with a long oar.

With the aid of a nice westerly breeze and a snoring ebb, the cutter travelled in fine style, and to my great delight passed several smacks and stumpy barges. Gravesend Reach was looking its best. Intermingled with numerous craft of commerce outward bound were bawley boats engaged in shrimping, and in the distance a great four-masted ship following in the wake of a fussy little tug. The red-brown sails of barges, lit up by the

evening sun, added a pleasing splash of colour to the scene, and as I sat at the helm of my first command I would not have changed places with a Rothschild.

All went well until we entered the Lower Hope, when, omitting to gybe the *Euryanthe*, she gybed herself. The boom came over with considerable weight, and the mainsheet, which was none too sound, carried away. Fortunately it was the standing part near the block that had broken, and we were able to repair it with a knot. I must confess, however, that the cutter performed some remarkable evolutions whilst we were engaged in reeving the sheet, which ultimately involved us in an altercation with a passing bargee that was neither profitable nor dignified. This *contretemps* caused some little delay, and it was dusk ere we arrived off Hole Haven. The entrance is a rather treacherous one for strangers, but as I had been given the most detailed instructions by some friends who kept a yacht in the Haven, I hoped to get in without mishap.

When we hauled our wind to stand in, it was at once apparent that the *Euryanthe* was very "tender." Although there was but a moderate breeze, several planks of her lee decks were buried beneath the seething water, and she griped so badly that it was all I could do to hold her on her course. Keeping well to the eastward as we crossed the bar, we made the entrance in safety, and as I had been told to bring up near the hard, I sent Billy forward to stand by the anchor. We

had but a short distance to sail, and in a few moments I shouted to my companion to let go. There was a great splash, instantly drowned by the roar of the chain through the hawse-pipe. On rushed the *Euryanthe* until the chain had all run out. Then she snubbed violently, and Billy took a header off the fore-deck into the water. Never shall I forget the shout of laughter that came from my friends, who were watching us from the seawall. It was certainly a rather sensational *entrée*, but every one enjoyed it immensely except Billy, who climbed out spluttering and vowing vengeance. He soon recovered his equanimity, however, and whilst he changed his clothes I stowed the sails, preparatory to going ashore.

The Lobster Smack Inn was famous amongst Thames yachtsmen in the early 'nineties for excellent fare, and my first meal of home-cured ham and fresh eggs under "Becky's" hospitable roof still sticks in my memory. There was a great gathering of yachtsmen in the bar parlour that Saturday night, and it was late ere we turned out to go afloat. My friends volunteered to put us on board, and we rowed off in their dinghy. But where was the *Euryanthe*? Every moment we expected to see her tall mast silhouetted against the sky; but we looked in vain. At length we found her high and dry ashore and listing outwards. It will be remembered that when bringing up I had allowed the whole scope of chain to run out, and she had evidently been blown out of the narrow channel in which she was lying and taken the



ground on the flat at the side. She lay over at a great angle, and with her narrow beam and deep draught there seemed very little prospect of her lifting to the tide on the flood.

Acting on the advice of my friends, we took up two of the cabin floor boards and nailed them over the lower side of the well, and, having secured an old sail over this temporary cover, sat on the heavily listed yacht to await the rising of the tide. At 2 a.m. the water was lapping on the deck, and half an hour later had reached the top of the coaming, but still the *Euryanthe* showed no signs of lifting. We had pinned the dinghy down to the lee-side of the yacht, and expected to see the latter move every moment. But in the meantime the water was pouring through the makeshift well-cover, and Billy and I had to turn to and bail. It was then that I discovered the extreme utility of that big soup-tureen. It made a noble bailer, and, ably backed by Billy with the bucket, we must have put tons of water back into its proper place. At last, when we were almost exhausted, the *Euryanthe* gave a little jump and began to lift rapidly. In a quarter of an hour the deck was clear of water, and we were able to remove the planks from the well. Our friends, having instructed us to heave in some chain when she floated, then took their departure.

We got the cutter afloat again without further trouble; but oh! the state of the cabin. Everything was soaked, and to sleep on the cushions was out of the question. After a couple of hours'

fitful slumber on the hard locker lids, we could stand it no longer, and securing a passage ashore in a passing boat, went to the inn for breakfast. A good meal cheered us up a little, and about ten o'clock we returned on board with the idea of drying the cabin gear. We were soon joined by our friends, who rowed off from their yacht to inspect the *Euryanthe* by daylight. The floor-boards which had been removed the previous night had not been replaced, and one of our visitors, producing a knife, began to test the timbers.

"Why, this boat's as rotten as sin," he exclaimed. "Look here!"

And he drove his knife-blade half-way through one of the floors.

I then knew why she had been sold for such a low figure. Almost every part of her had been attacked by dry rot, and she would have been dear at any price. And that was not her only frailty, for she leaked like a sieve. We pumped her out four times in the course of the day, and when we left her in the afternoon, to return home, I was quite out of conceit with my first yacht.

When I arrived at Hole Haven the following Saturday all that could be seen of the *Euryanthe*, was the top of her masthead, and, full of anger, I sought the man in whose charge I had left her. "Why haven't you pumped her?" I demanded; "I told you she made a little water."

"Why ain't I pumped 'er? Well, if you think I'm a-goin' to sit up all night pumping the bloomin' Thames through 'er, for three bob a week, I ain't."



“If you think I’m a-goin’ to sit up all night pumping the bloomin’  
Thames through ‘er, I ain’t.”





With which pertinent, or perhaps impertinent, remark he left me.

By pinning two barges' boats down to the yacht at low water we succeeded in refloating her, and she was eventually berthed in a rill on the saltings. What with this, and the cost of cleaning her out and having the gear dried, I spent pounds on the boat. Further expense was incurred in having her caulked and repainted, and by the time she was again ready for sailing, I must have spent a £10 note on her.

I had one more trip in the *Euryanthe*, sailing her round to Burnham. The passage, owing to various mishaps, occupied two days. I still have a lively recollection of the miserable night I spent, anchored near the Swin Middle lightship, with a fresh easterly breeze and a procession of steamers passing perilously close to us. The pump and riding light between them engaged my attention throughout the night, whilst my two companions slept and snored like pigs in the cabin.

I left her at Burnham, and it was with feelings of positive relief that I heard, two or three days later, that she had been run down and sunk by a barge. That was the last of the cutter *Euryanthe*. I sold the wreck for the sum of ten shillings after salving the spars and sails, and the waterman who bought her, chopped her up for firewood. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

## CHAPTER VII

### “TIERCEL” AGAIN

By the loss of the *Euryanthe* I was left without a yacht, although the salvage had yielded sufficient spars, sails, and gear to equip a craft of some five tons measurement. Obviously, the thing to do was to buy a hull of about that tonnage in which to put them, always supposing that I could find one. “Why not buy the old *Tiercel*?” suggested Anthony; “you could scrap her rotten gear and substitute *Euryanthe*’s, which would fit her like a glove; you would then have quite a decent boat for next door to nothing as we would sell her cheap.” This struck me as quite a sound idea, for the syndicate having bought the *Five Sisters* had no further use for their old love, which had been placed in a mud berth at Hole Haven. So I offered them a £10 note for the boat, and they accepted so readily that I felt rather sorry I had not said shillings instead of pounds.

Now, as I say, the *Tiercel* was lying at Hole Haven whilst all the gear salvaged from the wreck of *Euryanthe* was stored at Burnham-on-Crouch, and ere my new purchase could be refitted it was necessary to get her round to Burnham. Time after time I attempted to make the passage, but invariably found myself back at Hole Haven.



Week after week the wind blew from the eastward and the long plug to windward down to the Whittaker Beacon was more than the unweatherly old craft could manage on the tide. Only at one week-end were the weather conditions at all favourable for the trip; and then, as luck would have it, I had to put back owing to an accident.

I was accompanied on that occasion by a brother of Anthony's and we made capital progress until near the Maplin Lighthouse. Then my companion, anxious to get something from below, lifted the fore-hatch and jumped down into the fo'c'stle. Unfortunately the caretaker had left a broken bottle lying about, and my luckless mate, who was wearing neither shoes nor socks, jumped on to it, sustaining a deep gash right across the sole of his foot. Having severed an artery he bled like the proverbial stuck pig and in a little while the boat resembled a shambles. All my efforts to staunch the bleeding proved unavailing and so there was no alternative but to put back. The *Tiercel's* stock of first-aid appliances was of the scantiest description, but I made shift to bandage the wound with the grease-proof paper off the butter, a tea-cloth (somewhat soiled) and a towel. Having no dinghy I thought we might have difficulty in getting ashore at Southend, and so we held on for the Haven.

On arriving at our destination we were lucky enough to find the *Five Sisters* on her moorings, and plenty of assistance was available for getting my wounded friend ashore. Our troubles,

however, were by no means over, for on landing we were unable to procure a conveyance of any kind. To cut the story short, we carried Anthony's brother to Benfleet on a hurdle and managed to get him patched up in time to catch the last train to town. After this experience I had almost abandoned hope of getting the boat round to the Crouch before the spring, but determined to make one more attempt at Christmas, if I could find any one sufficiently enterprising to give me a hand.

The mere mention of yachting at Christmas is sufficient to send a cold shiver down the back of a landsman, but provided that one be suitably clothed for the part, and creature comforts not neglected, there are many worse ways of spending the festive season. To tear oneself away from the cosy fireside, when the snow lies thick upon the ground, certainly requires some little resolution; but he who takes his courage in both hands and puts to sea will, weather permitting, derive more benefit and enjoyment from his holiday than would be the case if he stayed at home and pandered to the flesh-pots of the orthodox Christmas. But it is essential that the weather be decently fine, for fog, snow, or gales of wind are apt to upset the best-laid plans.

It was late on Christmas Eve when we arrived at Benfleet, and even then a three-mile tramp across Canvey Island, heavily laden with packages of all sorts and sizes, lay before us. Billy had brought a turkey, which had unexpectedly been given to him in the City; Jack laboured under the

weight of a kit-bag stuffed almost to bursting point with good fare; whilst my contribution to the commissariat department included a large Christmas pudding, and sundry mince-pies, commandeered from the larder at home. It was evident that we had no intention of starving. What with the slippery state of the frost-bound road and frequent stoppages to adjust our luggage, the journey across the island was a slow one; and it was after eleven o'clock ere we reached the Haven and met the man who, for the sum of half-a-crown a week, condescended to take charge of the *Tiercel* in our absence.

"Almost given you up, gentlemen," was his greeting. "I've had the yacht ashore for a scrub and just laid her off. You will find her just by the *Swift*, and your dinghy's at the hard."

"Is she all ready for us, Jackson?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir, yes—you will find water and oil on board and everything you want."

"All right, good-night."

"Good-night, sir, and a happy Christmas."

Then we scrambled down the hard to the dinghy, not, however, without misadventure, for Billy slipped on the slimy planks and dropped the turkey in the water. But with the aid of a dinghy paddle we rescued the bird ere it drifted out of reach. Having packed ourselves and our luggage into the somewhat crank 8-ft. dinghy, we paddled gently out to the *Tiercel*, which rode to her anchor near at hand.

It was a glorious moonlight night, and we had



decided to get under way at once and drop down to Southend. But when we got on board we found that wretched rudder was unshipped again. This usually happened when the boat took the ground, as the rudder dropped an inch or two below the keel, which was quite sufficient to lift it off the silly little pintles upon which it was hung. Nobody being anxious to go overboard, the only method of shipping it whilst the boat was afloat, we decided to defer our start until the morning. Rolling ourselves in our blankets, we turned in "all standing," as they say, on the cushionless bunks.

One does not sleep very soundly under such conditions, and about two o'clock the following morning I was awakened by exclamations of unmistakable annoyance from Billy, who was sleeping on the floor.

"What's up?" I inquired.

"Why, I am lying in water," was the reply.

Groping for the matches, I struck a light, and sure enough there was an inch or more of water all over the cabin floor.

"She's sprung a leak," I said. "We must put her ashore at once!"

A few moments later we had broken out the anchor, and, setting the foresail, let her blow ashore on to the sandy bar. Then we started to pump, turn and turn about, to keep the water under. For two mortal hours we engaged in the back-breaking occupation. The leak was evidently low down, and the boat had almost dried out ere we

were able to desist from our miserable task. When the sand was uncovered we got over the side, and went exploring with the riding light.

We found the leak in the run of the vessel, and at the same time discovered that our caretaker had played us a rascally trick. He had evidently let the boat sit on her anchor when he laid her ashore for scrubbing purposes, and, to repair the damage, had stuffed a thole-pin and a bit of rag into the hole. Had not our start been delayed by the unshipped rudder, our Christmas trip might have ended in a fatality.

Having located the leak, we repaired the damage temporarily with the lid of a packing-case, a piece of an old sail, and some wire nails. Then, having shipped the rudder and laid out the anchor, we turned in again until daylight.

Christmas Day broke clear and fine, with a nice sailing breeze from the northward. The boat was almost afloat when we turned out, and after breakfast we started for Burnham, reaching down towards Southend over the last of the flood. It was bitterly cold, but with smooth water and enough wind to heel the boat to her deck, under a jib-headed topsail, sailing was most exhilarating. But the *Tiercel* was not destined to make Burnham that day, for as we approached Shoebury, it occurred to me to pull up a floor-board to see if the boat was still leaking. I found a good deal of water swishing about in the bilge, and although it was nothing to cause alarm, we came to the conclusion that, in view of the very temporary

nature of the repairs we had effected, it would be folly to venture very far. So we decided to have a sail round the Mouse and then put into Queenborough for the night. And this programme we carried out, finishing the day's sailing with a trip up the Medway. The shades of night were commencing to close in as we let go the anchor off Queenborough, and in the uncertain light it was not easy to estimate our distance from the shore. Consequently we brought up a good deal farther out than we should have done, and the boat lay in the fairway, although we were quite oblivious to the fact.

Then we directed our energies to the preparation of the Christmas dinner. How to cook a 12-lb. turkey in a frying-pan was a puzzle that might have given an experienced *chef* pause to think, but we, having done it before, soon solved the problem. The bird having been dismembered, the legs, wings, and slices from the breast were placed in the pan together with some sausages, bacon, and butter, the whole being fried gently over an oil stove for two hours. The pudding, which had already been cooked, was boiled in a large stewpan for a like period to warm it up. This method of cooking may not sound very appetising, but the result was beyond reproach, and when Billy added a bottle of champagne as coping-stone to the feast, we would not have exchanged dinners with any man.

The crew of the *Tiercel* at dinner must have presented a somewhat strange spectacle to any one







"We emerged from the cabin in time to see a great barge slithering away into the darkness."

[To face page 63.

unfamiliar with the manners and customs of those who go down to the sea in five-tonners. The cloth was laid on one of the bunks, as we had no table, and the crew sat or sprawled on the floor as fancy dictated. A hurricane lantern cast its sickly gleam upon the appointments of the feast, whilst the ruddy glow of a coal fire in the bogey stove added a homely touch to the picture. A bowl of rum punch simmered on the stove in readiness for future consumption, and—tell it not in Gath—the enamelled iron washing-up bowl had been pressed into service for the purpose. But, as the old proverb teaches, “There’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip,” and the fates decreed that our acquaintance with that punch should not extend beyond the smell.

While in the midst of our merry meal the *Tiercel* suddenly heeled over under the impact of a violent blow. There was a rending crash of breaking spars, and all three of us were flung in a heap on to the dinner-table. We scrambled up as best we could, and stood not on the order of our going. The cabin doors, which opened inwards, were closed, but we burst through them as if they were of cardboard, for we thought the *Tiercel* was sinking. We emerged from the cabin in time to see a great barge slithering away into the darkness, a man callously shoving her clear from our wrecked vessel with a quant. She had evidently run right on top of us, and our mast with all its attendant gear lay over the side. We shouted to the barge to stand by us, but her crew





answered never a word, and she disappeared into the night.

Hauling our little dinghy alongside in readiness for any emergency, we took stock of the damage. Fortunately the hull remained intact, but a clean sweep had been made of the top-hamper, and spars and gear lay over the side.

Our nerves could stand no more, so getting what gear we could on deck, and lashing the rest alongside, we towed the wrecked *Tiercel* on to the mud, and left her. Then we fled to the nearest inn, and passed the night in security beneath its hospitable roof.

After some little trouble I persuaded a bargee, who was bound up the river to London, to tow the *Tiercel* back to Hole Haven, but it cost me a sovereign. And so once more, with the unerring instinct of a homing pigeon, the old boat returned to her usual anchorage.

Being now without a mast, the *Tiercel* could not of course make the passage to Burnham, and so I set about having the gear sent round to Hole Haven, wondering why I had not thought of this simple expedient before. I went down to Burnham in search of a barge to bring the stuff round, but failed in my quest. But whilst having tea at a hotel, there came to me an ancient mariner, who had heard that I was looking for a boat to take some gear to the Thames. It appeared that he had what he was pleased to call a smack, but she was the weirdest-looking craft one could imagine. Personally I should have been sorry to

venture outside the river in her, but the owner seemed quite confident that he could undertake the job and I gave him £2 to deliver the gear at Hole Haven as soon as possible, somewhat foolishly paying him in advance.

I heard nothing more of the man or my gear for three weeks, and as the weather was bad feared that he had come to grief. But one Saturday, towards the end of January, he came sailing quietly into the Haven with all my gear piled up on deck. It appeared that he had stepped ashore at Foulness for a drink, and having £2 in his pocket it had taken him some time. But at last, after many months, I was in a position to start work on refitting the *Tiercel*, and my chum Billy having joined me in her ownership we started operations forthwith.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FOG-BOUND

EASTER fell particularly late that year, and our expectations of decent weather for the opening cruise of the season were not perhaps altogether unreasonable. Our experiences at that period of the year had in the past been so unfortunate, owing to the vagaries of the English climate, that we had registered a vow never again to fit out before May. But hope springs eternal in the human breast, and as the dreary winter dragged its course we began to take a more optimistic view of the matter.

"Hang it all," said Billy, "the weather can't be so very bad in the middle of April, and by the law of averages a fine Easter is about due." So I listened to the voice of the tempter and fell.

Neither Billy nor myself was overburdened with money, and what fitting out the *Tiercel* required had to be done by our own hands. From the early days of March, therefore, we spent our week-ends on the yacht, which lay in a mud berth at Hole Haven, busily engaged with paint-brush and scraper, what time fond sisters at home burnt the midnight oil in fashioning dainty curtains and cushion covers to adorn the tiny cabin of the *Tiercel*.



She was a poor thing as yachts go, having originally been a ship's lifeboat, to which some misguided individual had, in a moment of enthusiasm, added a cabin and a false keel. After passing through many vicissitudes, she had, by the exchange of a £10 note, come into the ownership of Billy and myself, and in the light of a more extensive knowledge of yachts I am now of the opinion that the vendor had the best of the bargain. But a season or two spent in her was a liberal education, for the man who could sail the *Tiercel* was qualified to sail anything.

The boat certainly needed an extensive overhaul before she was fit to go afloat, for her appearance was disreputable and her bottom not altogether tight. But much can be done by a judicious use of paint and putty, whilst lead tingles applied to a yacht's bottom with discretion will keep out a deal of water. I should doubt, however, whether any craft has ever put to sea with so many tingles on her bottom as did the *Tiercel* that Easter. By the time we had finished with her, the under-water body had all the appearance of a patchwork quilt; but the patches were hidden from view, except when the vessel was heeled in a strong breeze, and, as Billy very truly remarked, there is a skeleton in every closet. And this leak-stopping was by no means the end of our carpentering achievements, for a new rudder-post graced the stern of the *Tiercel* when next she put to sea on pleasure bent. This was perhaps the most ambitious job we tackled, and for a long time we were baffled by

our inability to find a suitable piece of timber. When we had almost abandoned the search in despair, we one day happened upon a beautiful oak gate-post, and before another day had dawned the new rudder-head was an accomplished fact.

We towed the *Tiercel* out into the tideway on the Sunday before Easter, and when she lay at her moorings ready for sea we could not but admire our handiwork. The yacht had never before looked so smart. Her shining topsides reflected the glory of the setting sun, the black enamel contrasting pleasantly with the white-painted decks. The varnish glistened upon the newly scraped rail and the inside of the bulwarks, picked out in a delicate shade of duck-egg green, added a pleasing splash of colour, which certainly enhanced the general effect. A transformation, moreover, had been wrought below decks. The low bunks were now covered with comfortable cushions, fashioned out of an old mattress cajoled from a confiding parent, and cretonne curtains of subtle hue separated the cabin from the fore-peak. A "remnant" of linoleum made the floor look neat and tidy, whilst the old hurricane lantern, that in the past had lighted the cabin by night, had given place to a neat gimballed lamp screwed to the mast.

As we journeyed to Hole Haven on the Thursday evening preceding Easter we congratulated ourselves upon the mildness of the weather, contrasting it with the howling gale that had curtailed our cruise on a similar occasion the previous year.

But this feeling of satisfaction was destined to be shortlived, for on arrival at Benfleet, the nearest station to the Haven, we discovered that our stores, despatched the previous day, had not turned up. The next goods train was due the following morning, but Good Friday being a *dies non*, so far as the goods department was concerned, there was no prospect of obtaining our stores before Saturday. After a brief consultation we decided to have them sent on to Burnham, thinking that we could procure sufficient food at the inn at Hole Haven for the passage round to the Crouch. Having settled this matter, we trudged across the Island to the Haven, and after a late supper went on board, taking with us some bacon, a few eggs, a loaf, and a piece of cheese. This was all we were able to procure in the provision line, but, with the addition of a few bottles of ale, we thought it would suffice until we picked up our stores at Burnham on Saturday.

When we got under way on the Friday morning there was the merest draught of air from the westward; and a cold, clammy mist hung over the waters of the estuary. Labouring hard at the sweeps, we rowed the *Tiercel* out into the tideway, and then let her drift on the ebb that had just commenced to run. Objects were not easily distinguished, but presently we made out through the haze the spidery form of the Chapman Lighthouse rising out of the water like a spectre on stilts; and resorting to the sweeps we pulled the *Tiercel* farther from the shore in order to get more



tide and to make sure of clearing the long pier at Southend.

We expected every moment to see the sun break through the haze, which we regarded as merely the precursor of a fine day, but, far from clearing, the weather began to get thicker. Then, just after we had passed Southend Pier, great banks of dense yellow fog rolled up and blotted everything from view. There is an uncanny feeling about sailing in a fog that is not altogether pleasant, and had not our early arrival at Burnham been a matter of the first importance we should have anchored until the weather cleared. Away to starboard the fog-horn of the Nore Lightship blared out its note of warning, whilst all around could be heard the syrens of many steamers feeling their way down the London river. They made one think of a flock of lost lambs bleating for their mothers, and the illusion was heightened by the occasional tinkle of the bell of some ship at anchor. And so, with our hearts in our mouths, we drifted into the great unknown, the sound of human voices close at hand suggesting from time to time perils from which we narrowly escaped. But we were soon to learn that this, the main artery of the world's commerce, was no place for such erratic wanderings as ours. It came upon us so suddenly that we could not lift a hand to avert the disaster. Without the slightest warning the *Tiercel* was carried by the swirling tide across the bows of a big schooner, and lay spitted on the latter's jib-boom. It was a moment of wild excitement. The yacht listed until the





“The yacht listed until the water poured over the coamings.”

To face page 71.



water poured over the coamings into the well, and we feared that she would founder. Then, with a rending crash, the topmast went by the board, and the *Tiercel* righted a little. Willing hands came to our aid, and several of the schooner's crew, swarming out along her jib-boom, commenced to hack away at our rigging with knives. At last the yacht swung clear, and, bumping all along the schooner's side, slithered away astern.

Our vessel, in whose appearance we had taken so much pride, now looked a sorry wreck. Her new paint had suffered severely, her rigging was in a hopeless state of confusion, and the topmast lay over the side. But we were only too thankful for our escape, and, hauling the broken spar, with its tangle of gear, on to the deck, we got out the sweeps and slowly and sadly rowed the boat on to the Shoebury flats and let go the anchor. Having, after an hour's knotting and splicing, managed to get the gear into some sort of order again, we resumed our journey in the fog. Punting along in shallow water with the sweeps, we made fair progress until the young flood, gaining strength, caused us to bring up. Then, retiring to the cabin, we threw discretion to the winds, and had a good square meal. By the time we had satisfied our hunger considerable inroads had been made into our scanty store of provisions. The position was getting serious. We had but the vaguest idea as to where we were, the fog showed no signs of lifting, and we had food for perhaps two decent meals. It was obvious that we must be very

sparing with the provisions, and so we decided that we would not have another meal that day. Lying at anchor, wrapped in a thick yellow fog, became more and more monotonous as the day advanced, and to escape the pangs of hunger, we turned in at seven o'clock.

We awoke the following morning, after sleeping the clock round, to find the same miserable conditions of weather. There was not a breath of air to stir the face of the waters, and the fog lay like a pall above us. We had the last of our eggs and a wretchedly inadequate supply of bread-and-butter for breakfast, and then settled down to kill time by playing cribbage. When the luncheon hour arrived, we tightened in our belts and started another game, although we were both heartily sick of playing cards. And so the day wore on. At 7 p.m. we dined off the remnant of the cheese, and then went to bed.

Sunday morning found us still in the same spot, with the fog as dense as ever. Our breakfast consisted of a slice of bread-and-butter and a glass of ale apiece; the remainder of the bacon—two rashers—being reserved for dinner in the evening. This day was a repetition of the previous one, with the exception that we did not play cribbage—the mere thought of it made our gorge rise. We counted the hours to dinner-time, and when that long-looked for moment arrived, how carefully we cooked our miserly rations. And how good those scraps of bacon tasted! But we had now eaten the last of our food, and not a crumb remained.

Our position would not bear thinking about, and so, after a pipe, we got to bed.

The everlasting fog was still with us when we turned out on Bank Holiday morning, but the thought of another idle day was intolerable, and although very doubtful as to our position, we determined to try to get across the sands, round Foulness, into the Crouch. We therefore got the anchor at high water, and poled along over the flats for a matter of three hours or more, when we ran aground on a little knoll and stuck. It was then one o'clock, and we should not float again until nearly 7 p.m. We had not eaten for thirteen hours, and felt weak and miserable from want of food. Billy tried the effect of chewing tobacco to stay the pangs of hunger, and was violently sick in consequence. It was, as he plaintively remarked, somewhat akin to jettisoning ballast from a ship already flying light. After much calculation and poring over the chart, we came to the conclusion that we must be far enough to the eastward to clear Foulness, if we could only get across the sands, and so we decided to direct our course to the northward when the *Tiercel* floated. And this programme we put into execution as soon as the yacht had water beneath her keel. As the tide made we poled her along, constantly taking the ground, but making steady progress to the northward. For three hours we rowed and poled, until we were fit to drop from sheer exhaustion. Then the water suddenly began to deepen, and ten minutes later we got three fathoms with the lead.



We were at last in the Whittaker Channel, and but six or seven miles from Burnham. But the flood had finished, and already the ebb was beginning to run. Further progress was impossible for the time being, and, having dropped the anchor, we turned in.

At about four o'clock on the Tuesday morning I was awakened from a troubled sleep by the sound of little waves playfully slapping the sides of the *Tiercel* and, pushing back the slide, I looked out. The fog had gone, and a smart northerly breeze was stirring the waters once more into life. "Get up, Billy," I shouted to my companion, "there's a breeze and we are only just outside the river." Ten minutes later we were under way, and making short miles to our destination. Our troubles were over, for at 5.30 a.m. the anchor of the *Tiercel* bit the mud of the Crouch off Burnham. We hastily lowered the sails, and, tumbling into the dinghy, rowed ashore. As we entered the High Street the first thing to meet our gaze was a baker's shop. Pushing past a girl engaged in cleaning the doorstep, we dashed to the counter and fell to upon a tray of stale hot-cross buns. It would be indecent to say how many we demolished or how many bottles of fizzy lemonade we drank, but the girl's look of astonishment still lives in my memory. When we had taken the rough edge off our hunger we returned on board to stow the sails and tidy up. Then, having handed the yacht over to the care of a waterman, we made for the nearest hotel and had the breakfast of our lives.

## CHAPTER IX

### DOWN SWIN

IN the tender years of childhood, with pen pointing to the right shoulder and much hard breathing, we were wont to inscribe in our copy-books the maxim "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," but a long and varied experience of cruising in small yachts has led me to rather doubt the truth of that well-worn aphorism. One sees raw and callow yachtsmen rush out, in their ignorance, to meet dangers that would bring misgiving to the hearts of older and wiser sailormen, and yet they emerge scathless from the ordeal. Indeed, when one considers how often in the course of a season budding yachtsmen embark upon adventures of peril, and how seldom such trips are attended by untoward results, one is led to the conclusion that a special Providence watches over the welfare of the nautical tyro. But there is no confidence like the confidence of youth, and, full of the joy of living, the average youngster in the early days of his sailing apprenticeship is ready to go anywhere in anything that will float.

It was whilst in that embryonic stage of my sailing career that I consented to sail the *Enchantress* from Rochester to Burnham one bitter day in midwinter. I knew very little of her owner,

Vansittart, beyond the fact that he had previously bought a boat from me, but it was evident that a few sails in that old five-tonner, on the sheltered waters of the River Crouch, had converted him into an ardent yachtsman. His ideas, indeed, showed a tendency to run away with him, and within a week or two of his first setting foot on a deck he had purchased the 25-ton yawl *Enchantress*, with a view to living afloat. The yacht, when he bought her, was laid up at Rochester, but ignoring the cold and treacherous weather, he had her roughly fitted out for the passage to Burnham, where he proposed to station his new purchase. Although comparatively wealthy, Vansittart was of an economical turn of mind, and did not believe in paying for assistance that could be procured for nothing. Rather than spend a few pounds in engaging a professional crew for the run he invited me, at that time a comparative novice, to take charge of the vessel. I had never sailed anything larger than a five-tonner, and, although a trip down Swin in midwinter does not offer any very alluring prospect, I jumped at the chance of handling a vessel of such size. As, however, I was unacquainted with the waters of the Medway, I insisted upon taking a pilot as far as Sheerness, to which Vansittart ultimately agreed. The crew question presented some little difficulty, as winter yachting does not appeal to every one, but we eventually persuaded two luckless wights to accompany us. Of these, Harry, a friend of Vansittart, knew practically nothing of yachting,



but had served his apprenticeship on a full-rigged ship, whilst Billy had been my companion in more than one foolhardy adventure, undertaken in small craft of doubtful seaworthiness.

If the premium charged at Lloyd's to cover the *Enchantress* against the risks and perils of the sea during the voyage may be taken as a criterion, the underwriters did not think much of the proposition, and I am pretty certain that the late skipper of the yawl, who was to pilot us down the river, thought still less of it when he saw the crew. It was approaching midnight when we went on board, and I could not see much of the boat, but she seemed a big vessel after the tiny craft I was accustomed to sail. Although ready for sea, she still lay in her mud berth, and would not float until after ten the following morning. Below decks all was bright and cheerful, the ruddy glow of the fire imparting to the saloon a homeliness that went to one's heart. The paid hand, who was sleeping on board for the last time, had certainly made things very comfortable for us, and we spent a very jolly hour or two before turning in, as Vansittart played divinely upon the violin.

The following morning I had an opportunity of examining my command, and when I saw by daylight the length of her spars, I was not without secret misgivings as to the success of the trip. She was one of the old-fashioned "plank-on-edge" yachts, some 60 ft. over all, by 10 ft. beam, whilst her draught, the skipper informed me, was 9 ft. 6 in.

She was very heavily sparred, and evidently carried a great spread of sail, while the abnormal length of her bowsprit indicated a large and unhandy jib. I was pleased to notice, however, that the topmast was stowed on deck, as also was one of the two boats.

It was a bitterly cold morning, and a fresh north-easter sighed in the rigging. Overhead, the low-lying clouds moved briskly across the horizon, and there was a look of snow in the sky. At high water, under the direction of the skipper, we laboriously warped the *Enchantress* from her slimy bed, Vansittart distinguishing himself in the process by casting off a chain from the bollard, and losing overboard the second anchor and forty fathoms of new galvanised chain. But they were his own property, and if he liked to play ducks and drakes with them he was quite welcome to so far I was concerned. The owner's costume, by the way, attracted a good deal of attention, every passing barge greeting us with some ribald jest. He wore a ready-made monkey jacket, evidently bought at a slop shop, that extended almost to his knees, oilskin trousers tucked *inside* his sea-boots, and a very short oilskin coat, below which the monkey jacket extended like a ballet-dancer's skirt. For headgear he had a scarlet stocking cap, and round his neck a muffler of similar hue, the ends streaming out bravely in the fresh morning breeze. But perhaps the *pièce de résistance* of this sartorial effort was a sheath-knife, some eighteen inches long, strapped on his

hip by a broad leather belt, which he wore outside everything. Was ever such a twopenny pirate seen outside of a Skelt melodrama?

With a fine sailing breeze and a snoring ebb, we made a quick journey down to Sheerness, where the paid hand was to leave us. Feeling rather cold, and thinking that a row would warm me up, I rashly volunteered to put the man ashore. Having hove the yacht to, we jumped into the dinghy and made for the shore. A few minutes' sharp rowing brought us to the pier, and as the late skipper landed he remarked, as a parting caution: "Take care she don't run away with you, sir; you'll find a rare sea in the Swin, and she's a boat that wants a lot of sailing."

As I started to row back to the yacht, my shipmates let the foresail of the *Enchantress* draw, and stood down to meet me, but, handling the vessel in the most eccentric manner, they led me a pretty dance. Time after time the yawl came roaring down on top of me, and I had to pull lustily to escape being run down. As the result of these capers, I chased the yawl for the best part of an hour ere I managed to scramble on board. Indeed, I might have been chasing her now had not their blundering put her "in irons." I had hardly climbed on board when the snow, that had long been threatening, began to come down in earnest, and in a few minutes the shore and all marks were blotted out. Then the fog-horn of the Nore Lightship began to blare its warning notes, and we responded with feeble little



grunts from our own imperfect apparatus. With the lead going all the time, we gradually crept out into the Thames Estuary, but in the teeth of such a blizzard it was wicked work. The driving snow and sleet lashed our faces like whips, and our limbs soon lost all power of feeling, and could only be used like logs. As we left the Nore astern, however, the squall passed over and the snow ceased. But the wind increased in force, and the *Enchantress*, with a plank of her lee deck awash, was tramping along at a merry gait. As we had a long board before us to the Essex shore, Vansittart and Billy, acting on my suggestion, went below for lunch, leaving myself and Harry in charge of the deck. With a strong weather-going tide there was a nasty sea running, and the *Enchantress* was already taking sufficient water on board to necessitate the use of oilskins. I was just struggling into my oilskin jacket, which, as is usual with such garments, was in a hopeless state of stickiness, when Vansittart clattered up the companion ladder. With a pallid face he staggered to the weather side. I, for my sins, was to leeward of him, and—well, the result can be readily imagined without going into unpleasant details. But my wrath was soon changed to pity when I saw what miserable case he was in. I have seldom seen any one so hopelessly seasick, and between the violent attacks of nausea that frequently gripped him he lay groaning upon the deck, praying to be put ashore. That, of course, was out of the question, and we tried to persuade

him to go below; but he wouldn't hear of it. With the yawl diving deeper into the seas every moment, he was certainly not safe, rolling about on deck as he was, and with Billy's assistance I got him aft to the taffrail and lashed him securely to the mizzen-mast. And there the proud owner of the *Enchantress*, looking a picture of abject misery, was destined to sit for hours, for the rest of us had other matters to occupy our minds and hands.

For some time past the breeze had been piping up, and it was now blowing a strong wind, which, meeting the ebb, knocked up a sea as steep as a cliff. The curling, breaking waves washed over the *Enchantress* as if she were a half-tide rock, filling the decks with water, and threatening to carry away the gig, which was lashed bottom upwards on the starboard side. Time after time we had to tighten up the lashings, and with the weather getting rapidly worse, the gig was the source of constant anxiety.

The shades of night were now closing in upon us, and the warning rays from the Maplin and Swin Middle Lights appeared ahead. We got out the side lights, but found there were no wicks in them, and so had to pursue our way without the prescribed lanterns, a menace both to our own safety and that of others. We ought to have shortened sail long before, but could not find the reef tackle, and so we still staggered along under the whole mainsail. The yacht was frequently buried to the sky-lights in the seething waters,

and it was all Billy and myself at the helm could do to hold her on her course. Vansittart seemed to have subsided into a state of dumb misery, and we had almost forgotten his existence, whilst Harry braved the elements on the fore-deck, working the headsail sheets, Billy running forward to give him a hand every time we went about.

Then, as we approached the Swin Middle light-ship, disaster overtook us, for the *Enchantress*, getting out of hand in a squall, got "in irons." Vessels of her type, having a tremendous grip on the water forward, are very difficult to get going again when once stopped, and whilst we were engaged in trying to coax her off the wind, Billy looked up and suddenly shouted, "My God! There's a steamer right on top of us." We howled and yelled in chorus, but on she came with her three lights open. Then, slightly altering her course, the great liner, ablaze with lights, passed within a few yards of us. But the aftermath, in the shape of her wash, was our undoing, for a huge, curling wave broke with a mighty roar right over us. Billy and I were thrown off our feet, but saved ourselves by hanging on to the tiller lines. Then the yacht seemed to shake herself free from the avalanche of water, and as it passed we struggled to our feet. To our horror we discovered that both Harry and the gig had disappeared. The boom was banging wildly overhead, and jib and foresail slatted in the breeze with a violence that made itself heard above the howling of the wind in the rigging.





“A huge wave broke with a mighty roar right over us.”

*[To face page 82.]*



Sick at heart, I looked astern and shouted. A feeble answer came out of the blackness of the night.

"Perhaps he has caught the dinghy," said Billy, and, grabbing the painter of the little boat that followed in our wake, we hauled her up hand over fist. To our unutterable relief we found Harry clinging to the stern, and soon pulled him on board. Sending him below for a change of clothing and a stiff tot of rum, Billy and I got the yacht on her course, and we were soon threshing down Swin again.

Gradually we won our way to the Whittaker Gas buoy, and then it was a fair wind into the Crouch. Running up the Whittaker Channel on a dark night at low water, in a craft drawing 9 ft. 6 in., would be anxious work for even an experienced yachtsman, but our joy at getting a fair wind obliterated all thoughts of danger. Having but little confidence in my ability to steer an exact compass course, I decided to work along the sands with the lead, standing in until we got two fathoms, and then sheering off again. This, of course, would entail frequent gybing, and, being so short-handed, we thought it best to check the boom over the quarter, and settle the peak of the mainsail a little. Even with so little drift of sheet, the heavy boom came over with a rare bang every time we gybed, but, fortunately, the gear was good, and nothing parted. And so we felt our way into the land, and, more by luck than judgment, managed to keep clear of the treacherous



sands. When well inside the Crouch we luffed head to wind and anchored for the night. Dead beat and numbed with cold, we did not attempt to stow the mainsail, The canvas was as stiff as a board, and all we could do was to lower the sail on deck and secure it with one or two gaskets, whilst the jib and foresail were lashed into a bundle on the fore-deck. Then we went below and, finding the fire out, turned in cold and supperless.

The following morning was bright and sunny, with a gentle southerly breeze, and, after a late breakfast, we got the anchor and reached up to Burnham. As soon as we had picked up a mooring, Vansittart went ashore, and, so far as I know, has never since set foot upon the deck of a yacht. Anyhow, the *Enchantress* was offered for sale within the week, and shortly afterwards left the country. The rest of us still continue to sail boats, and have had many an exciting cruise together; but, looking back down the vista of years, I can recall no occasion on which Providence was so good to us as during that memorable trip down Swin in the *Enchantress*.

## CHAPTER X

### IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINE

PLEASE do not suppose that Jevons was a particular friend of mine. Far from it, for I had only met him casually in the City. That he was a shrewd man of business I knew to my cost, for whenever pitted against him in the way of commerce I had invariably come off second best. But what of that? In these strenuous days of keen competition, when one has to fight like a rat in a pit for a bare living, there is no time for vain regrets. One merely thrusts a fresh iron into the fire and tries one's best to get it hot. Jevons and I, however, soon discovered that we had a common interest in yachting, and seldom met without talking "boats" for a few minutes.

I had not seen him for, I should think, nearly a year, when one day he came and sat down by me in a certain unpretentious little restaurant, far famed amongst City men for the excellence of its viands. He greeted me with effusion.

"Hullo," he cried, "you are just the man I want."

"Well, that's eminently satisfactory," I replied. "What can I do for you?"

"Why, I'm selling the *Curlew*, and have got a fellow coming down to try her on Saturday.

He appears, however, to know very little of sailing and I want some one to give me a hand. The boat is a ten-tonner you know."

"The prospective purchaser is a bit of a mug, eh?" I suggested.

"I hope so," replied Jevons with refreshing candour.

As my craft was laid up, and I had nothing particular to do on the following Saturday, I readily consented to give Jevons a hand, and we forthwith made arrangements to journey to Fleetbridge together.

"This is a splendid paper to advertise in," remarked Jevons, handing me a certain well-known journal. "I've had no end of replies. I think I've worded that rather well, don't you?" he continued, pointing to his advertisement.

I took the paper and read the following:

"Must be sold, owner going abroad. Ten-ton cutter, mostly lead ballast. Fast handsome yacht, splendid accommodation, and grand sea boat. Sacrifice for £50. Apply J.," etc.

"Why, Jevons, you must be giving her away," I exclaimed.

"Well, I don't know about that, but she's not such a bad old boat."

"But I didn't know you were going abroad," I continued.

"Oh, that's all right. Every one says that, or else, 'owner buying a larger'!"

I scanned the advertisement once more.

"How much lead is there?" I inquired, more



for the sake of saying something than from any particular thirst for knowledge.

"Oh, I don't know exactly," replied Jevons with a grin, "but I'm sure there's some. She's all right you know," he continued. "You'll come and give me a hand on Saturday, won't you?"

"Oh yes, I'll help you sail the paragon."

It was early in February, and the weather on the day appointed was not exactly of a nature to convince a recruit of the joys of yachting. The wind came in vicious puffs from the westward, and the low, driving clouds were heavy with unshed rain. Moreover, it was bitterly cold, and the rawness of the air chilled one to the very bones.

Arriving at Fleetbridge early in the afternoon, Jevons and I found Williams, the prospective purchaser, awaiting us. He seemed a decent enough fellow in his way, but there was no doubt about it—he *was* a mug. He had evidently laid the foundation of his yachting career by the purchase of a complete outfit of the Southend Pier order. A monkey jacket with brass buttons—on each of which was wrought a cunning little foul anchor—white duck trousers, canvas shoes, and, as coping-stone to the whole structure, a large-topped, shiny-peaked yachting cap. Did ever one see the like? And in February too!

As we walked down to the hard, Jevons explained that the *Curlew* was not looking quite so smart as she might, for she had been in commission all the winter, but when fitted out, the boat could

hold her own for appearance with any of them. He had a very plausible way of talking, as I knew to my cost, and that afternoon he was quite at his best. Turning to Williams, he inquired :

“ You have not yet had a yacht of your own, I think ? ”

Receiving a reply in the negative, he continued :

“ Then, my dear fellow, let me warn you. Do not be led away by the glamour of glistening brasswork and glossy enamel. What you want is a good seaworthy craft, with iron fittings, in fact everything for use and but little in the ornamental line. Simplicity and soundness should be your motto, and I think you will find the *Curlew* an ideal craft in such respect. But here we are at the hard, and you will soon see for yourself. There she is.”

Gazing in the direction which Jevons had indicated, I, to my astonishment, beheld a disreputable old converted ship's boat.

There was a moment of awkward silence, which was at length broken by Williams inquiring in a hard dry voice, “ Which did you say was the yacht ? ”

“ That one over there,” replied Jevons, again pointing to the craft at which he gazed.

“ Oh ! ” ejaculated Williams, in a tone which did not savour much of enthusiasm. “ She's not quite what I expected.”

I myself turned away, ostensibly to knock out my pipe, but in reality to hide a smile, for I was not altogether a stranger to such experiences.

Then Jevons, turning to Williams, commenced to talk.

"My dear fellow," he began, "you cannot expect the boat to look her best at this time of year. You only see her in her winter *déshabillé*. Ah! she looks very different in summer. Besides, you want a yacht for use, and not for ornament, don't you?"

Breaking off, he turned to me:

"Oh, by the way, old man, you might run into the Inn and order dinner for seven o'clock, and you had better warn Mrs. Jones to have plenty, for this breeze will give us a rare appetite. Williams and I will launch the dinghy whilst you are gone."

Now, I hope I did Jevons no injustice, but as I walked up to the little Inn, I could not help thinking that he was anxious to get me out of the way for a short time whilst he lied to Williams about the capabilities of the *Curlew*. Anyhow, when I returned, the latter seemed almost as enthusiastic as Jevons himself.

I found that they had launched the dinghy in my absence and were now waiting for me. Jevons was sitting on the middle thwart with the sculls in his hands, whilst Williams stood in the bow, eagerly surveying the *Curlew* as she tossed about fretfully on the troubled waters.

"Hold on," I shouted, as, giving the dinghy a vigorous shove, I leapt in.

My warning, however, apparently came too late, for Williams subsided into the bottom of the boat,



and happening to alight on the anchor looked particularly sorry for himself.

Jevons was very sympathetic, and cursed me roundly for my carelessness. We arrived on board without further misadventure, and at once set about getting under way.

The wind came in vicious little squalls, and a rapidly falling glass foretold a breeze. So Jevons decided to put a pair of reefs in the mainsail. The sails were dressed to save the bother of putting on covers—at least, that was what Jevons told Williams. But when three reef points in succession tore out of the sail as I essayed to tie them, it occurred to me that even as a woman will sometimes paint her face to hide the ravages of time, so might oil and ochre be applied to a sail for a similar purpose.

“Don’t be so rough with those points,” Jevons hissed in my ear.

“Oh, all right,” I replied, somewhat nettled, “you had better tie them yourself,” and I went forward in high dudgeon to get the jib ready, being followed by a warning shout from Jevons to “mind that fore-hatch.”

I soon had the jib out on the bowsprit with halyard and sheets bent on. By this time Jevons had finished reefing the mainsail, and everything was in readiness. Taking the tiller, he shouted to me :

“Slip the mooring and set the jib—take care of the fore-hatch.”

The rusty old chain ran through the hawse-pipe

with a roar, and I looked round for the fall of the jib halyard.

It was nowhere to be found.

"Where's the jib halyard belayed?" I shouted to Jevons.

"Oh, I expect it has gone aloft," he calmly replied, as if the rope in question were a kind of Tom Bowling.

Sure enough it had. It had become so short, owing to a multiplicity of long splices, that when the jib was lowered on deck, the end of the halyard was of necessity at the masthead. However, I swarmed up the shrouds, and securing the truant soon had the sail set and sheeted home.

Relinquishing the tiller to Williams, Jevons came forward to give me a hand with the mainsail.

"You take the throat and mind that fore-hatch," he said, as he cast off the halyards from the fife-rail.

It was about the fourth time that he had warned me of the hatch. Did he think that I was so unaccustomed to boats that I might trip over it? I was beginning to be a bit annoyed at his solicitude, and it was on the tip of my tongue to consign Jevons and his fore-hatch to a place where overcoats are at a discount.

When the throat was nearly up, I belayed the halyard, and putting one foot against the mast, gave a vigorous swig on the rope in order to set the sail. It was then that I solved the mystery of the fore-hatch, for the halyard parted, and in jumping backwards to save myself from falling,

my foot crashed right through the wretched thing. Phew! the gear *was* ripe and no mistake; so was the boat too, if the hatch were any criterion.

I myself was very much annoyed at the incident, as I had barked my shin pretty badly, but Jevons simply danced with rage.

"Curse you, you fool," he hissed between his teeth, "I told you to be careful."

This was adding insult to injury, and I remonstrated with some little warmth. It would probably have ended in a serious squabble had not Williams supplied the necessary diversion by ramming a smart little cutter which was lying on her moorings near by.

The owner of the boat happened to be on board, and seeing his bowsprit floating midst a tangle of gear, said nasty things; and Jevons, already well warmed up, replied with spirit. The stranger was pretty useful with his tongue, but Jevons's eloquence rose to transcendent heights, and the former soon retreated to his cabin before the lava-like stream of withering sarcasm hurled at him. I cleared the boats, and having temporarily repaired the broken halyard swarmed up the mast and re-rove it.

We were fairly off at last, and the old hooker, laying down to her work, bustled along in her best style, piling up a huge wave beneath her bluff bows. We were all rather ruffled as to our tempers, consequently conversation was rendered conspicuous by its absence. But after a time it occurred to me that it was approaching high



water, and the ebb would soon be coming down; so I casually remarked to Jevons :

“ How about the tide ? ”

“ Damn the tide ! ” was the laconic response.

We were speeding down the Estuary towards the open sea, and at the pace the *Curlew* travelled it would not be long ere we were outside the river. There was no other craft under way, but occasionally we would pass a smack rolling heavily in the tideway, and sheering wildly at her moorings. It was a cheerless prospect, and I, for one, had no particular fancy for going far out to sea in that old trap. The glass continued to fall rapidly, and darkness would soon be upon us. So, putting my pride into my pocket, I returned to the subject.

“ The flood is about done, Jevons,” I remarked.

“ Doesn’t matter; we shall fetch back with this wind.”

“ Supposing it shifts,” I objected.

“ Why should it ? ” queried Jevons, who was evidently in an argumentative frame of mind.

“ Why shouldn’t it ? ” I retorted.

As if in answer to my question the wind suddenly backed to the south-west in a terrific squall. The old boat buried herself to the coamings, and we were all thrown violently to leeward. The jib-sheet parted, and the *Curlew*, relieved of the pressure forward, shot up into the wind. In a few moments the jib had thrashed itself to shreds before we could secure it, and whilst Jevons and myself were vainly endeavouring to muzzle the remnants of the sail, the mainsheet strop carried

away. Then, indeed, were we betwixt the devil and the deep sea.

It was a wild moment. The wind howled and shrieked through the rigging, whilst the hail and rain pattering on deck blotted out everything from view. We were without oilskins, and in a few minutes were drenched to the skin. The boom banged viciously from side to side, taking charge of the after part of the vessel, and Williams in a state of terror crouched in the steering well.

Jevons let go the halyards, and the topping lift, unable to bear the strain of the wildly kicking boom, parted, and let the mainsail flop over the side into the water. Then we brought up with unseemly haste to consider our position.

We were indeed in sore straits. Ten miles from home, with a gale of wind right in our teeth, and a hot ebb tide just commencing to run. We had, moreover, lost our only jib, and there was no food of any sort on board. Our friends across the Channel are right; the Englishman *does* take his pleasure very sadly. Obviously the first thing to do was to effect temporary repairs, and sick at heart I assisted Jevons to get the mainsail on board. Then another journey aloft to reeve the topping lift, the broken parts of which I had repaired with a knot. The hail had given place to a mizzling rain, whilst the blackness of night was fast closing in upon us.

Pulling down the third reef we got the anchor, and attempted to beat up the river. It was a forlorn hope; for with no headsail, but a reefed

foresail, we lost ground every board. There was nothing for it but to bring up until the tide turned. With melancholy thoughts of the dinner awaiting our return in the cosy little parlour of the Fleetbridge Inn, we let go the anchor, and having roughly stowed the sails, retired to the cabin.

If there had been but poor comfort on deck it was little better below, as all the cabin gear—if the boat possessed any—had been sent ashore. We had no light, and could not even smoke, as our tobacco and matches were soaked. We were all pretty cold and miserable, but Williams, in his white ducks, was a pitiable object. As we sat and shivered in the dark, I could hear his teeth chatter incessantly. Soon, however, he left us, for the violent pitching of the boat did not agree with his internal economy. Retiring to the well he leant over the side, and for a time gazed earnestly into the Stygian waters.

“Do you think he’ll buy her?” whispered Jevons.

“If he gives you more than five shillings for the old death-trap, he ought to be shut up in a lunatic asylum,” I replied.

“Well, you needn’t be rude about it.”

“Rude!! You have the consummate cheek to bring me on an expedition like this and talk of rudeness!” I indignantly retorted.

Fortunately the reappearance of Williams put a stop to what promised to develop into an unseemly wrangle.



Crawling into the cabin, he dropped on to the floor with a groan.

"I've had nothing to eat since breakfast," he remarked by way of excuse for his sea-sickness.

"It would have been all the same now if you had," I snapped back.

Then we all sat in the dark and sulked.

We could hardly have been called a convivial party. Jevons went to sleep and snored loudly, whilst Williams lay on the cabin floor in a state of collapse, writhing in the grip of *mal de mer*. Pulling my sodden monkey jacket closer round me, I endeavoured to follow Jevons's example, but the surroundings were not conducive to slumber. The boat pitched and groaned, whilst some cooking utensils in a locker kept up an incessant clatter. Without, "the water wraith was shrieking," and the halyards played a devil's tattoo on the mast. So the evening slowly sped its course. Suddenly Williams started up with a white scared face.

"There's water on the floor," he cried.

I put down my hand, and felt it swishing about. That was the last straw. Taking a deliberate aim I kicked Jevons hard upon the leg. He awoke with a curse on his lips.

"What the——?"

"You had better pump out the old basket before she sinks," I interrupted.

And he did. For three-quarters of an hour the crazy pump clanked ere she sucked. But the exercise seemed to have banished Jevons's ill-

humour, for it was with quite an air of cheerfulness that he shouted, "Come along, you chaps, the tide has about done, and we shall soon get back now."

So we turned out into the bitter night, and set the sodden canvas. Then followed an incident which might easily have proved fatal. Whilst Jevons sailed the boat I was engaged in fishing and catting the anchor. It was rather a heavy mud-hook, and as I leaned over the side I somehow lost my balance, and in a moment had slipped from the deck into the seething water. As I rose to the surface a black object loomed out of the darkness close at hand. Throwing out my hand, I grabbed it, and to my relief found it was the dinghy. I gave a yell, and with an answering shout, Jevons put the *Curlew* about. As the yacht was in stays, I clambered into the dinghy. The latter was towing on a long painter, and I crawled forward to haul myself up to the yacht. As soon as I got into the bows of the dinghy, however, she gave a wild sheer and nearly swamped, so I beat a hasty retreat to the stern. In the meantime Jevons had eased the mainsheet and was running back. I gave another yell and round came the yacht again.

"Where are you?" shouted Jevons.

"Here, in the dinghy," I answered. But although I could hear him distinctly it was evident that my voice did not carry against the wind, for round came the *Curlew* once more.

It was certainly a very humorous situation, but I wanted to get on board, so when the yacht had

lost her way in stays I grabbed the painter, and rapidly hauling the dinghy up managed at last to scramble on board.

Jevons was not a little relieved to see me again, for it was obvious that he had been considerably scared. I myself was not sorry to feel a boat under my feet once more, however rotten she might be. The incident, moreover, served to dissipate the bad feeling which had existed before, and with mutual congratulations we turned to and resumed our homeward journey. Shaking out a reef in the mainsail, and setting the whole foresail, we made better progress. Considering the state of the gear, it came perilously near to "carry-ing on," but we were heartily sick of it.

The *Curlew* tore through the water with her lee deck deeply buried, and her bluff bows smashed the short seas into clouds of stinging spray which continuously swished aft. Occasionally she would dig her nose into a hollow wave, causing a torrent of water to rush madly over the decks and cabin-top into the well. But we hardened our hearts and plugged her at it. In the cabin, the floor-boards floated about and the water lay deep over the lee bunk. Whilst Jevons and I worked the boat, Williams bailed vigorously with a bucket, without which we could not have kept her afloat.

Thus, at length we came to Fleetbridge, and sailed the *Curlew* on to the mud. It was then three o'clock in the morning, so we did not waste much time over stowing the sails. Putting a couple of tyers round the mainsail, and another



round the foresail, we dropped the anchor and a few fathoms of chain overboard, and in a few minutes were pulling ashore in the dinghy.

We, of course, found the Inn shut up and in darkness, but as Jevons remarked, it was absurd to suppose that we were going to spend the remainder of the night on the doorstep; besides we wanted our belated dinner. But we hammered on the door in vain, for the noise was drowned by the raging of the storm. After a time, Jevons went off to see if by any chance the back door had been left unbolted, whilst Williams and I proceeded to examine the bar windows. Joy! There was one unlatched, but the sash-line proved to be broken. Three hungry men were not to be kept from food and shelter by such a trifle as that, so I got to work with my knife. In a moment I had prised up the sash sufficiently to insert my fingers beneath it and open the window wide.

"You get in, Williams, whilst I hold it up," I said.

He climbed through and dropped gently into the room. There was a soft pattering noise on the floor—a savage growl—and then a piercing shriek rang through the house. A big retriever dog had seized Williams by the leg. The noise speedily brought Jevons to the scene, and fortunately he was sufficiently acquainted with the brute to call him off. The old adage that "it's an ill wind which blows nobody any good," was however once more exemplified, for Williams's cry had aroused

the house, and in a few minutes the landlord, in the scantiest of attire, was ministering to our wants. After an ample meal and a stiff glass of hot grog all round to counteract the evil effects of being so long in wet clothes, we retired to bed at 4 a.m.

When Jevons and I turned out the next morning at about midday, we learnt that Williams had left by the morning train, and neither of us have seen or heard of him since. Whether he eventually bought a yacht I cannot therefore say, but I trow not.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BUILDING OF "SLEUTHHOUND"

AMATEUR boatbuilding is a pursuit indulged in a good deal more than is generally supposed, but one only hears of the successful achievements. The failures are usually buried in oblivion—or the back garden, as the case may be. To construct a small yacht worthy of the name two factors are absolutely essential, viz., tools and some knowledge of their use. In my case both of these desiderata were negligible quantities, and *Sleuthhound*, as may be readily imagined, was not destined to be an epoch-making craft. I should think it is open to doubt whether such another boat has ever been seen, for in many ways she was unique. *Sleuthhound* was, indeed, a sort of low comedian of the seas, for the mere sight of her never failed to raise a smile. The word "smile," I must mention, is used in this connection from motives of euphony, as, to be truthful for once in a way, she was usually greeted with ironical gibes and unseemly merriment by yachtsmen who owned just ordinary boats that any fool with a bit of money can buy. Still, I must confess that the candid criticism to which my "yacht" was so often subjected occasionally ruffled my



temper; and once, spurred on by particularly insulting epithets hurled at my creation by some small boys on the bank, I ran the boat ashore and "booted" them soundly, which made good sport, as Samuel Pepys was wont to remark in his ever-delightful diary.

Whatever could have induced me to embark upon such an undertaking I cannot conceive, but, of course, it happened when I was still in the first blush of youth and possessed of more enthusiasm than sense. As far as I can remember, I got the notion from one of those silly articles that sometimes appear in boys' papers: "How to build a sailing yacht for fifteen shillings," or something of that kind. But it was only the germ of the idea I had from the paper, for on reading the article I found that the craft described was fashioned of canvas, a feature that was not quite to my liking. A canvas boat may be all very well in its way, but it has its disadvantages: if, for instance, in a fit of absent-mindedness you happen to shove your foot through the side you've got to swim, which is rather a bore. So I decided to build my boat of wood, and I don't suppose there has ever been so much good wood spoilt in a couple of week-ends before or since. My only previous carpentering experience was of the odd-job-about-the-house order, usually performed with the aid of a dinner knife and the back of a hair-brush. The tools employed in the construction of *Sleuthhound* were not much more extensive, for they consisted merely of a meat-saw, a screw-

driver, a chisel, a gimlet, a hammer, and a screw clamp.

The science of naval architecture was to me as a sealed book, and the drawings from which I worked were as primitive as my tools. My original idea was to build a boat of the ordinary type with round bilges and overhangs fore and aft, but on further consideration I came to the conclusion that the scheme was impracticable, as I should have to steam the timbers. To build a steam-box and plant seemed to me almost as great an undertaking as to construct the boat herself, so I decided that she should be a sharpie with a canoe stern and lee boards.

Then I got out my working drawings. These were simplicity itself, consisting merely of deck and sheer plans. She was to be 15 ft. long by 5 ft. beam, so I first drew the deck plan 15 in. long on a big sheet of paper. The frames were to be 6 in. spaced, so at every half-inch on the deck plan I drew a line. The sheer plan was prepared in a similar manner, and then by carefully measuring the lines on the drawings and multiplying the result by twelve I had the correct dimensions of each frame. Having arrived at this stage, I calculated the amount of wood I should require, and ordered it already planed up from a timber merchant. Such trivial items as the keel, stem, sternpost, lee-boards, and spars I dismissed from my mind as altogether beneath me, and turned them over to a common shipwright to make. These cost me £4; the wood for frames, planking,

deck, and coamings another £4. As my worldly possessions amounted to a bare ten-pound note, the financial position was somewhat strained, but, with the enthusiasm of youth, I started in to work with a light heart.

Where to build the boat was the next problem, but I eventually obtained permission to make use of the cart-shed attached to the little inn at Fambridge. This shed was not altogether without its advantages, for I had merely to raise my voice and mine hostess would fly to the scene of operations with a flowing stoup of ambrosial ale, and ere *Sleuthhound* took the first plunge into her natural element the good lady had grown quite thin with the unwonted exercise. Looking back down a vista of years, I still have pleasant recollections of the noble thirst generated by much slaving at the saw, and those potations of Treble X were perhaps the only really satisfactory episodes of an ungenerous task.

The keel, stem, and sternpost arrived from the shipwright bolted together and were of a somewhat ponderous nature. The keel of English elm was 9 in. by 6 in., and the stem and sternpost of oak were not much less. Those who raised their voices in an exceeding bitter cry against the harshness of the scantlings imposed by the International Rules would have hung their heads in shame after inspecting *Sleuthhound*, for everything was in proportion to her keel. The frames were one and a half inch (finished) and planking a full inch. The first thing was to mark with chalk, on the



upper part of the keel, the positions of the floor timbers, and then, with the aid of saw and chisel, hack out notches for them to rest in. I started my labours at three-thirty on Saturday morning and worked until dewy eve. The progress was remarkable, for if my carpentering be of the rough order it is certainly rapid. At first I was rather troubled by the antics of the keel. It would stand up by itself all right when let alone, but as soon as I began to talk to it with the meat-saw the beast fell over. The simple expedient of securing it with battens of wood to the sides of the shed never occurred to me, but the problem was solved by the aid of four empty beer barrels, two supporting the stem and two the sternpost. Having cut out the notches for the timbers, I started in to make the frames themselves. This was comparatively easy work, for it merely meant sawing off the right length of quartering, making rough mortices at the ends, and joining together with brass screws. But, oh! the waste of beautiful screws. I drove altogether seventy-six dozen of Nettlefold's best and not a single one lives to tell the tale. By midday I had made half the frames and got them screwed down to the keel. Then the farm labourers came from their work. The shed in which I was building the boat was, I must mention, at the side of the road and one end open. I was kneeling inside the framework of *Sleuthhound* when I became aware of the fact that I was no longer alone.

"They'll get out o' that, guv'nor."

I turned round with a start and beheld a burly ruffian standing at the open end of the shed scrutinising my work.

"What will get out?" I pleasantly inquired.

"Why, the chickens, to be sure," replied the solitary spectator, expectorating freely on the ground.

"Chickens, you fathead!" I exclaimed with scorn. "This is a yacht."

"Well, I never 'eard tell of a yacht o' the likes o' that; I doubt I'll just fetch the missus to 'ave a look," and he went away.

I was not left in peace for long, however, for the news that a gent was building a yacht in the cart-shed of the Ferryboat spread like wildfire. The whole village turned out to bear me company in my labours, and the remarks offered anent the lines of *Sleuthhound* were most free. They were genial fellows in a way and brought out their beer in order that they might combine business with pleasure. Sitting round in easy attitudes they passed, no doubt, a very pleasant afternoon, whilst I, assuming an air of nonchalance that I by no means felt, pursued my work in the full glare of public criticism. The presence of so much company and the candid remarks upon the manner in which I handled my tools made me nervous, and several little mishaps occurred which eventually culminated in a catastrophe. I was sprawling on top of the framework screwing vigorously when the whole caboodle collapsed and let me through. Never shall I forget the howl of merri-

ment that arose from every side whilst I with a scratched face and a broken heart slowly extricated myself from the wreckage.

Turning to the crowd of grinning rustics with the remark, "That concludes our performance for this evening," I stalked, with what dignity I could summon to my aid, into the inn, and calmed my ruffled feelings with a good dinner.

The following day I laboured hard to repair the damage which had been caused by my kneeling on the deck-beams before the coamings had been fitted. As I had only bought just sufficient wood for the whole job, I could not replace the broken beams, and had to mend them as best I could. This I at length accomplished with sundry iron plates, bits of string, and wire nails. Then I set to work to plank her up, and by the evening had finished the bottom and sides. Operations were then deferred until the following week-end, which was perhaps as well, for I required all kinds of things to finish the boat, and my available cash was exhausted. The remedy was not far to seek: I must take a partner, and thus bring more money into the concern. To find one, as may be readily imagined, was not an easy task, but at last I induced a youth as guileless as myself to listen to my blandishments. I pointed out the advantages of a boat of the *Sleuthhound* type. One could, I remarked, cruise anywhere round the coast, and in the event of being overtaken by bad weather, all one had to do was to run the craft ashore, step out, and pull her up the beach. Such



was the theory, but I doubt if anything short of a powerful traction engine could have moved her.

For the sum of five pounds sterling my friend became the proud possessor of a third share in the yacht *Sleuthhound*, "now building," and the financial position was saved. Assisted by my partner, I made another daybreak start the following Saturday, and we got on so fast that we decided to launch her at high water on the morrow. When she was planked up and decked I crawled inside to look round, and to my dismay saw streaks of daylight percolating through the seams of the planking. I attempted to caulk them, but as I did little more than put the oakum in one side and knock it out the other I resolved to resort to a more drastic remedy. We first of all tarred her all over with no niggardly hand and then covered both bottom and sides with unbleached calico. Another coat of tar finished the job, the deck being treated in a similar manner save that white paint was substituted for the tar. This tarred calico covering settled the matter so far as the local people were concerned, for they now insisted that it was a coffin of novel shape, and there was some little speculation as to the identity of the hapless wight for whom it was intended. But I was quite hardened to the wit of the rustic wags and went on calmly with my work. I will now let out a secret which has never yet been told to living soul. When I saw the boat in being I came to the conclusion that she had her greatest beam too far forward, so I made what was intended

for the bow the stern, and vice versa; and so *Sleuthhound* sailed always stern first (according to the design) when she was not going sideways like a crab. This, I must remark, was one of the features I had in mind when I previously described her as being unique in some respects.

There was still a lot to do in the way of stepping masts—she was yawl-rigged—hanging the lee boards and fitting the drop rudder, that I had acquired by means known only to myself; and it was not until 2.30 on Sunday morning, after many hours of hard labour by the feeble light of flickering lanterns, that the fast and favourite yacht *Sleuthhound* was pronounced ready for sea.

To launch the boat was a task that might have caused even the late Mr. Hercules some trouble, for the distance from the shed to the river was over three hundred yards. We managed to get her down to the bank, however, with the aid of ten lusty men, the boat being slung by stout ropes on short lengths of scaffolding pole. With five men on either side, walking slowly in step, and headed by a facetious yachtsman whistling Chopin's *Funeral March*, we started on the journey to the sea-wall. The rear was brought up by the landlady of the inn, with a new hat of the Merry Widow type on her head and a bottle of port in her hand. To her had fallen the honour of christening the boat that had taken shape in her cart-shed. At length, after much sweating and swearing and stumbling, *Sleuthhound* was safely lodged on the wharf that is used for unloading

barges and the scaffold poles employed for purposes of portage were then placed beneath her bottom as rollers. As nothing could be done until the tide was at the full, we sat down to wait, what time a considerable crowd collected to witness the ceremony.

*Sleuthhound* was to be launched with all sails set, and as she took the water I, her creator, was to leap gracefully on board, trim the sheets, and sail away 'midst the plaudits of the assembled multitudes. That was the sort of picture I had conjured up in my mind. But, alas! how different was the reality. When the psychological moment arrived the boat was run down the stage, and the bottle of port broken on the stern, much to the disappointment of the spectators, who had a vague idea that it might perchance be handed round. Unfortunately, the rollers had not been placed straight and *Sleuthhound*, slewing round, pitched on to the corner of the staging, which crashed through her bottom. I leapt on board as she went into the water, but the boat promptly filled and rolled me into "the ditch." The mast-step, moreover, had carried away with the sudden lurch and the spar toppled over the side. The launch can hardly be said to have been a success, but the crowd enjoyed it immensely.

With much difficulty we got the wreck on to the hard, and, after the tide had ebbed, repaired the bottom with pieces of a cube sugar box, but we could not make her tight. We spent days tinkering about with her, but all to no purpose,



until at last we decided to cement her. When some three inches of concrete had been placed all over her bottom *Sleuthhound* was more or less tight, and we were able to go for a trial trip. Her sailing qualities were really not worth speaking about, for, under the most favourable conditions the maximum speed attained did not exceed a mile an hour through the water. She was not particularly handy either and could only be induced to "stay" by much persuasion from a long oar. As for the lee boards, I could never see that they were of any use at all until one day they jambed my partner's fingers and led to the invention of several new, cunningly conceived, cuss words.

We soon got "fed up" with *Sleuthhound*, and after drifting about in her for a time she was sold for fifteen shillings for breaking-up purposes. Portions of her graceful hull may yet be seen edging the flower-beds of a cottage garden at Fambridge, so, after all, she has served some useful purpose in the world.

## CHAPTER XII

### A NIGHT ON THE SANDS

It was away back in the 'nineties that I acquired the sloop *Wave*. She had originally belonged to an ill-fated brig that had left her bones to rot on the Gunfleet Sands, but, the boat having been salvaged, an enterprising waterman bought her for a mere song and in his spare time added a small cabin and false keel, thus converting her into a tiny yacht. Her overall measurement was only 16 ft., and her beam 5 ft. 6 in., but for a craft of that nature she sailed quite decently, and I never regretted the ten-pound note that I gave for her. On the starboard side of the cabin there was a low bunk on which one could just sit upright, whilst a visitor could, at a pinch, turn in on the floor if he did not mind sleeping on what the sailor man terms a "donkey's breakfast."

Having had no opportunity of sailing the *Wave* in open water, I welcomed the suggestion of some friends that I should cruise round to Brightlingsea and meet them there on a certain Saturday morning, although, as it was in the early days of February, I cannot say that the time of year was altogether suitable for open-water sailing in such a tiny vessel.

As bad luck would have it, I was compelled to







“There was no alternative but to remove my nether garments.”

[To face page 113.]

journey up to London on the Friday when I proposed making the trip, and being detained in town was unable to start until late at night. It was after eleven o'clock when I left my cottage to go on board. To reach the river bank at Fambridge was not an easy matter in those days, as, owing to a breach in the sea-wall, the land in the immediate neighbourhood of the river was flooded, and one had to cross the floods in an old shooting-punt. As the tide swept rapidly across what remained of the road, it was a passage perilous, and mishaps were of frequent occurrence. On this particular night I found that some one had borrowed the punt, and there was no alternative but to remove my nether garments and wade through the icy water. By the time I reached the sea-wall, I was miserably cold, and, as a handkerchief does not make a very efficient towel, I arrived on board in anything but a dry condition.

It was then close upon midnight, and I got under way without further delay. There was a moderate breeze from the westward, and with the tide ebbing hard, the *Wave* made good progress down the river. It was a dark, cheerless night, and sailing was rather a strain on the nerves, as the loom of the land made it difficult to gauge the distance from the mudflats. Well as I knew the river, I found it necessary to cast the lead, an operation that is apt to make one unpleasantly wet. All went well on the trip down the river, although I had a narrow escape from fouling a yacht at anchor off Burnham. She had no riding



light, and I passed her at such close quarters that the *Wave's* boom dragged along the whole length of her side.

The clock struck one just after I had passed through Burnham, and, feeling wretchedly cold, I lashed the tiller, and, dragging from the cabin some blankets, wrapped them round my shoulders. Near the mouth of the river there was a fleet of barges at anchor, and their lights were a useful guide; but, having left them astern, I had to trust to the lead again. Keeping in soundings along the edge of the Dengie Flat, I headed for the Buxey Beacon, a rather absurd thing to do in a craft of such light draft perhaps, but in those days I had but little knowledge of the waters outside the river, and I religiously followed the channel indicated on the chart.

On leaving the shore-ends I had lit the binnacle lamp, but it was one of those silly little toys that yacht-chandlers foist upon the novice, and it constantly went out. Having relit it some half-dozen times, I decided to remove the lamp altogether and use a bit of candle. Lashing the tiller, I went below for this purpose, but a protracted search for the box of candles kept me from the helm longer than I had intended. By the time I had the light burning and the binnacle shipped in its place on the bulkhead, I had got out of touch with the Dengie Flat, and had to trust entirely to the compass. As it was not a spirit compass—the only kind of any use for small-boat work—the card oscillated violently with the motion of the



yacht, and to have kept a steady course would have taxed a better helmsman than myself.

After sailing for a time I was forced to the conclusion that I had fairly lost myself. Still, I knew that my course was about north-east, and so I kept the craft on that bearing as well as I could. All of a sudden there was an ominous scrunch, and the *Wave* was hard and fast ashore. Here was a pretty kettle of fish. Having no dinghy, I was unable to take out an anchor, and, being on a lee shore, my efforts to push her off with an oar were unavailing. The water left her very fast, and, giving up the attempt as hopeless, I lowered the sails and retired to the cabin to think matters over. I had but the haziest idea as to my position, but concluded that the *Wave* was on the Buxey Sand.

Soon the *Wave* was high and dry, and, climbing over the side, I went for a run on the sands to try and restore my circulation. Then I returned to the cabin, and lighting the Primus stove brewed a jug of steaming coffee. I reckoned that it was about four hours' ebb when the *Wave* had stranded, and so four hours at least must elapse ere there would be sufficient water to refloat her. Obviously the most sensible thing to do was to turn in for a bit, but in case of emergencies I left the cabin lamp burning. Presently, just as I was dozing off, I heard a wild clatter of gear, followed by a torrent of lurid language. Scrambling out into the well, I was just in time to see the sails of a barge looming out of the darkness as she filled

on the port tack. She had evidently been misled by my cabin light, and had only discovered that I was aground just in time to save following my example.

I suppose, really, I should have extinguished the light; but it was so lonely and dreary out there by myself on the sands that I could not bear the thought of being left in the dark. And so I compromised matters by tacking some cloths over the scuttles in the coamings. As I lay in my bunk making a pretence to read, I could hear the roar of the surf breaking on the sands and the plaintive cry of plover and curlew, which hovered over the yacht in a manner that suggested vultures. The wind sang a mournful song in the rigging, and the halyards played a devil's tattoo on the mast. Then snow began to fall heavily, and a feeling of unutterable desolation crept into my soul.

The spirit of impending misfortune hung over me, and I began to imagine all kinds of disaster. Three miles or more from land and no dinghy; what could I do if the boat went to pieces? Then another horrible thought crossed my mind: what if the breaking seas should fill her before she floated? This was quite within the range of possibility, as the deck only covered the forepart of the boat, the well from the cabin aft being quite open and even destitute of waterways. Then it occurred to me that it was possible to take precautions against this latter contingency, and, glad of having something to do at last, I sought out

an old foresail, the hammer, and some nails, and with the aid of the cabin floor-boards proceeded to temporarily deck in a considerable portion of the well.

By the time this was accomplished the tide had made sufficiently to reach the *Wave*, and the water began to lap her keel. But then a new horror arose in the form of wind. The breeze, which had veered to the north-west, had for some time been increasing, and now came in angry squalls, accompanied by driving sleet. As the tide made, the waves slapped the side of the boat, sending up showers of spray; and it was obvious that by the time there was sufficient water to float her there would be a good deal more sea than I cared to think about.

But it was time to make preparations for getting her off. The anchor I had already laid out at low water, having carried it as far as I was able by wading up to my knees. All I had to do, therefore, was to make sail. Pulling down a pair of reefs in the mainsail and setting up the foresail in stops, I hoisted the former, and having coiled down the halyards, waited, with considerable misgivings, for her to float. I was glad to see, however, that the covering I had put on the well kept out a quantity of water that would otherwise have come on board. Presently she began to lift as the seas rolled under her, and gradually swung to her anchor. For a quarter of an hour or more the boat bumped heavily on the sands, and every moment I expected something would start. But



those who had built her had done their work faithfully and well, and, so far as I could see, she sustained no serious damage. Riding head to wind and sea, the little craft pitched heavily into the Stygian waves, sending aft clouds of icy spray that stung my face like a whip. All around was a hell of seething water, and as she tugged at her chain, threatening every moment to break adrift, the seas swept her like a half-tide rock.

After much thought I had come to the conclusion that the only chance of getting the *Wave* off this lee shore was by sailing out the anchor, but I did not care to make the attempt until there was more water beneath her. So I hung on for a full half-hour, with one arm round the mast to prevent being thrown overboard. I was speedily drenched to the skin, and as I stood there peering into the murky night, with shivering limbs and chattering teeth, I thought with Shakespeare, "Lord ! what fools these mortals be." But now the time had come for action. Breaking out the foresail, I belayed the sheet to windward, and then stood by the anchor chain. With her foresail aback, the boat took a wild sheer away from her anchor, and then, snubbing at her chain, came round on to the port tack. Now was my chance. As she sailed towards her anchor, every moment gathering speed, I rattled in the chain as fast as I could, and snatching a turn round the bitts sailed the anchor clean out of the ground. A wild dash aft to the tiller, followed by a violent

slatting of the foresail as I stayed her, and the *Wave* was safely afloat again.

Now that I was off the sands I had to decide whether I should go on or return to the Crouch. So far as I could judge, I was about midway between Burnham and Brightlingsea, and in either case I had a beat to windward before me. After some consideration I determined to carry out my original programme, and therefore put the *Wave* on a north-easterly course. This, I concluded, would take me to the Knoll Buoy, or at any rate keep me clear of the sands until I sighted the light on the buoy. I found that the *Wave* could lay this course comfortably, and fortunately the snow had ceased to fall. With a slashing breeze the little boat travelled fast, and after sailing for about three-quarters of an hour I saw the occulting light on the buoy winking through the darkness. All was now plain sailing, at any rate until I reached the Knoll Buoy; and already there was a glimmer of light in the eastern sky. I was soon round the Knoll, and began to beat in towards the land, whilst the sky grew lighter and lighter. Soon I was able to distinguish through the uncertain light the ghostly forms of barges and smacks coming out from the Colne, and with a procession of vessels to guide me had no difficulty in finding my way into Brightlingsea Creek. Bringing up alongside my friends' yacht, I went on board, and having borrowed some dry clothes, joined them at breakfast, thus keeping my appointment after much trial and tribulation.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A TABLOID CRUISER

THE diminutive cabin of a boat of only sixteen feet in length could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered commodious for two full-sized men, but the thought of possible discomfort never occurred to either Hugh or myself when we made our preparations for a short cruise in *Wave*. But then we were young and in those days counted ourselves fortunate in having a cabin at all. *Wave's* cabin was certainly of the pill-box order, but I think we used the space to best advantage. On the starboard side was a low bunk upon which it was just possible to sit upright under the cabin-top. This was naturally claimed by the owner, the visitor being provided with a "donkey's breakfast" (*anglicè* a straw mattress), which at night he spread upon the floor. By day the mattress found a resting-place at the back of my bunk, being tied to the side of the boat, wrapped in a waterproof sheet. In the bow of the vessel I had constructed a large locker, which contained a somewhat scanty supply of crockery and our provisions for the trip. The Primus stove and cooking utensils were housed in a box in the well just outside the cabin door, and during the day the riding light was lashed to the



foot of the mast. For want of a better place the spare foresail was kept under my bunk cushion, as, indeed, were a good many other articles, which tended to make my bed a trifle lumpy. Then room had to be found for a two-gallon jar of water, a can of paraffin, a large-sized biscuit tin containing bread, and, finally, our two portmanteaux. When all these items had been collected and passed into the cabin we discovered, to our dismay, that there still remained a large kit-bag full of blankets. How to get inside ourselves was something of a problem, but we managed it somehow, although it must be confessed we had little sleep that first night when we joined the boat at Fambridge.

We were up betimes the next morning, and, dropping down to Burnham, brought up alongside *Nora Creina*, a small canoe-yawl owned by my brother, who was to cruise in company with us. Although technically a canoe-yawl this little boat was really sloop rigged, having a gunter-lug mainsail and roller foresail. She was of the bulb-fin type and fast and weatherly although inclined to be wet in rough water. Measuring 18 ft. by 5 ft. she was half-decked, my brother using a tent spread over the boom at night, when the weather conditions permitted him to do so. If there was much wind, however, the tent caused the boat to sail about at her anchor, and under such conditions he had to dispense with the tent. This was not altogether pleasant on a wet night, for sticky oilskins, and pyjamas are a horrible combination.

We had decided that West Mersea, on the River

Blackwater, should be our first port of call, and although the weather outlook was by no means encouraging, we deemed it best to take advantage of a fair wind and adhere to our programme. The sky was overcast and heavy with unshed rain, whilst a fresh breeze from south-west meeting the young flood was already knocking up a jabble of sea in the river. But no one likes to waste a fair wind and so we hurried over breakfast. Presently both boats were under way, each with a reef tied down in the mainsail. Keeping the north shore aboard in order to cheat the flood as much as possible, we made excellent progress, and in an hour were outside of Shore-ends. Although *Nora Creina* could make rings round *Wave* on a wind there was not a great deal of difference in their speed on a run and we kept fairly well together. *Nora Creina*, however, gradually went away, and at the Fishery Beacon led by perhaps a quarter of a mile.

Reaching through the Raysand Channel we found the water rather lumpy and the tubby little *Wave* cut some very lively capers, but beyond a little spray no water came aboard. My brother, however, seemed to be having a very wet trip in the canoe-yawl, and before long was busy with the bailer.

When cruising in company with another craft in unfamiliar waters it is not always a disadvantage to be in the slower boat, as all the little problems of navigation fall to the leader. We appreciated this fact as we approached the Blackwater, for the low-way through the sands is somewhat intricate. Whilst my brother was having a particularly wet

and uncomfortable time of it heaving the lead, we could sit at ease and smoke our pipes, for all we had to do was to follow in the wake of *Nora Creina*.

The sun broke through as we crossed the Blackwater, a noble expanse of sailing water, and the village of West Mersea looked very pretty as we drew near. The mudflats thereabouts are very treacherous, but they were covered at that state of tide, and in sublime ignorance of their existence we sailed right over them. Seeing a line of smacks at anchor close to the shore, we simply made for them and brought up. We learnt afterwards that *Nora Creina* had dragged her bulb through the soft mud for several yards; but *Wave*, drawing less water, did not touch and it was only some hours afterwards, when the tide was down, that we realised what a narrow escape from stranding we had had. However, there we were, brought up in the Besom Fleet in excellent berths close to the hard, and consequently had no cause for complaint.

On going ashore we were quite charmed with West Mersea, and decided to make it our headquarters for a few days whilst we explored the Blackwater and Colne rivers; and as the weather steadily improved we had a most enjoyable time pottering about in the neighbourhood.

Having spent the best part of a week in the Blackwater we decided to venture round the coast to the Orwell. With a view to picking up the young flood at the Naze, we deferred our departure until the afternoon, starting at two o'clock when the tide was at half ebb. The wind was light



from S.S.E., and we reckoned we should have ample time to reach the Naze before the flood began to make. But "the best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley," and being becalmed for a time the tide turned against us when we were off Clacton.

Had we been wise we should have put back to the Colne, but, not liking to admit defeat, we decided to anchor and wait for a breeze. It was nearly seven o'clock ere we were able to proceed, and the wind, when it came, was right in our teeth. However, the flood had not yet gathered much strength, and getting our anchors we commenced to beat over it. *Nora Creina* was immeasurably superior to *Wave* at this game, and we were soon left far astern. Still, we were getting along fairly well, and had hopes of saving our daylight into Harwich. But as the tide gathered strength our progress became more and more unsatisfactory, and we were still a mile from the Naze when the shades of night began to close in upon us.

It was now obvious that we could not save our daylight, and I began to have grave doubts about saving the flood tide into the Orwell. To make matters worse both wind and sea were steadily rising, and *Wave* had all she wanted of the former under her whole mainsail. We were both rather silent and pensive as darkness overtook us, and the outlook certainly was not very alluring. If we held on we had every prospect of spending the night at sea in strange waters without sidelights, for not contemplating being under way after dark we had omitted to provide ourselves with the regulation

red and green lamps. To give in after struggling so far was heartbreaking, but it seemed the wisest thing to do, and so we decided to run back to Brightlingsea.

There was now a nasty sea for a small boat, and we were carrying far more canvas than was altogether prudent; but we fought shy of reefing the mainsail in the dark. Watching for a smooth, I put the helm up and with my heart in my mouth, as the saying goes, wore her round. The little craft came round safely, but her antics when running before the following sea scared us more than a little. She rolled abominably. At one moment the boom-end soared up towards the masthead, and the next was trailing in the water. The boat hung on the crest of every wave and then rushed forward with the scend of the sea, threatening to broach-to every moment. And there was no shelter to be had nearer than the Colne, some twelve miles distant. The little *Wave* was at that time quite open aft, having no waterways round the well, and every moment I expected a sea would break aboard and swamp her.

"This isn't good enough," I shouted to my companion. "Let's bring up off Walton and try and get ashore."

Hugh cordially agreed and scrambled forward to get the anchor ready. The light on the pierhead was already close at hand, and in a few minutes we hauled our wind round the pier and let go the anchor, allowing the full scope of chain to run out.

Riding head to wind and sea, the motion of the

little boat was simply indescribable, and it was with the greatest difficulty we managed to get the sails down and stowed, shouting lustily all the time. Then we lit and waved the riding light to attract attention. For a long time our signals were ignored, and feelings of unutterable desolation and despair crept over us. I shall never forget the sensation of relief that slid into my soul when at last I heard an answering hail and saw a big shore-boat loom out of the darkness. In a few minutes she was alongside and our troubles were over.

And so we basely deserted our ship and sought shelter for the night beneath the hospitable roof of the Portobello Hotel, where we had a good square meal and a first-mate's nip of hot rum before turning in. As I lay in bed listening to the roar of the surf on the shore I thought of the little *Wave* tossing about off the pierhead, and wondered if we should find her there in the morning, for it seemed unlikely that she would hold on to a single anchor through the night.

The next morning, when I looked out, I found the weather in complete contrast to that of the previous night. The wind had blown itself out and everything was bathed in sunshine. Hurrying over breakfast, we went down to the pier, and were rejoiced to see *Wave* riding to her anchor just where we had left her, and to all appearances none the worse for the rude buffeting she had experienced. But when we got on board we found her in a pretty pickle inside. Everything that could possibly do so had broken adrift and lay in a heap on the cabin



floor. Pots of jam and tins of condensed milk stood upon their heads, their contents being plastered over cushions and bedding, and of our slender stock of cups and saucers hardly one remained intact. It took us the best part of two hours to clean up the mess and get the cabin shipshape again, but we were only too thankful to have got out of our scrape so easily.

Our troubles of the night were soon forgotten, and to complete our happiness a nice sailing breeze filled in from the south-east and sent us speeding towards the Orwell. The tide was ebbing, but by keeping in the comparatively slack water of Dovercourt Bay we made capital progress and soon got past Shotley Spit into the Orwell. By this time the heart had gone out of the ebb and we ran over it easily up to Pin Mill, where we found *Nora Creina*, which had managed to save the daylight into the river the previous evening.

That Pin Mill should be the favourite venue of yachtsmen who sail on the south-east coast is not surprising, for it would be difficult to find a more charming anchorage in all England. The village, known to the postal authorities as Chelmondiston, lies some little distance from the river, but a picturesque little hamlet, comprising one or two cottages and a couple of inns, stands at the head of the hard, and at high water the tide laps the wall of the Butt and Oyster. The yachts for the most part lie at moorings in the little bay under the shore of Woolverstone Park, and are well clear of all traffic. One may land at any state of tide, and

the hard is particularly well adapted for scrubbing a small yacht. If it were only more accessible from London, Pin Mill would make an ideal yachting centre, but then if one could get there as quickly and as easily as, say, Burnham-on-Crouch, it would soon be overcrowded and would probably lose much of its charm.

Densely wooded to the water's edge the Orwell is by far the most delightful of east-coast rivers, and for sheer beauty is worthy of being placed in the same category as the Dart, Fal, and Beaulieu rivers. As we looked round upon the fair scene we remembered with regret that our holiday was drawing to a close, and that we must say good-bye to this delectable haven on the morrow and begin to work our way homewards.

With the idea of seeing as much of the river as possible in the short time at our disposal, we changed into shore clothes, and after a hasty lunch boarded the steamer and went up to Ipswich. It was but half an hour's run, and the scenery all the way was magnificent, particularly in the neighbourhood of Freston Towers. We spent the afternoon exploring the town, and then dined with my brother at the Great White Horse Hotel, where, it will be remembered, Mr. Pickwick had an awkward adventure. We drove back to Pin Mill in the cool of the evening, and, boarding our respective craft, turned in for a few hours' sleep preparatory to making an early start in the morning.

For once in a way we kept our good resolutions and at 3.30. a.m. were having a preliminary break-

fast. Half-an-hour later we slipped from the moorings we had borrowed, and started for Brightlingsea, *en route* for the Crouch. There was a flat calm and we drifted slowly down the Orwell, pulling with the sweep occasionally to keep steerage way on the boat, but when we reached Harwich a little breeze from S.W. by W. enabled us to lay the Naze. We jogged along comfortably with a light wind and calm sea until past Frinton and then it began to blow freshly. The breeze rapidly increased, and the sea began to rise, so we thought it desirable to reef. But before we had finished taking down the first reef I saw that the second would be required. So we kept *Wave* hove-to whilst we pulled down the second reef and shifted the foresail for a smaller sail. By the time we had finished doing this it was blowing really hard, and we noticed two barges in the distance had lowered their topsails. There was, moreover, a nasty sea for so small a craft, and when we filled on her and began to sail the boat she shipped a green one that nearly swamped us. Perhaps the most prudent course to have followed would have been to turn tail and run back, but we rather funked running before a heavy following sea with our open well. We therefore pulled the foresail aweather and laid her to. The little boat rode fairly comfortably like this and so we remained hove-to for a couple of hours or more, when the weather began to improve and we were able to resume our journey. But the delay cost us our tide, and progress was painfully slow. To cheat the tide we worked the



shore in short boards, and by keeping the lead going were able with our light draught to stand in very close. Working past Clacton we stood in so close that we got mixed up with some ladies who were bathing, and they seemed somewhat disconcerted at the appearance in their midst of so unusual a visitor.

After passing Clacton the wind took off rapidly, and we were able to shake out our reefs and by one o'clock, when we were still a mile from Colne Point, the breeze failed altogether and we had to bring up. This seemed a favourable opportunity for lunch, but to our disgust we discovered that the sardines we had bought at Pin Mill were bad and the butter was rancid. And so we had nothing to eat but dry bread, miserable fare after a "dusting" at sea. Although the wind had died away there was still a good deal of sea running, and we rolled abominably for two and a half hours under a scorching sun. By this time we felt that we could stand it no longer, and as the ebb had slackened a good bit and there was now a faint breeze we decided to try and get into the river. Getting the anchor we began to work the slack in short boards.

On our second board towards the shore we struck some submerged piles and bumped heavily four or five times ere we got clear of them. The parrel line broke, at the same moment releasing a number of lignum vitæ balls which pattered on deck and startled us more than a little. I soon realised what had happened, however, and managed

to rescue several before they rolled overboard. As soon as we were clear of the obstruction we anchored and pulled up the floor-boards to investigate. I fully expected to find the boat leaking badly, but she proved to be quite uninjured; and so, having repaired the broken parrel, we got our anchor again and made another start.

There was only a light air of wind, but with the aid of the sweep we contrived to crawl along and ultimately got into the Colne, having taken nearly three hours to cover that mile. By the time we reached the bar the sea was quite smooth, and we crossed with barely a foot of water beneath our keel. It was dead low water and we poled her along with the sweep. We seemed to be floating over a sort of marine garden, so luxuriant was the growth of seaweed. The water was as clear as crystal, and as I punted the boat along my companion amused himself by trying to spear "five fingers," of which there were great numbers, with the boathook.

Once in the Colne our troubles were over, for we now had the young flood to help us. Our chief object in life was to get something to eat, and to save time we changed into our shore clothes as we drifted up the Colne. It struck eight as we anchored in Brightlingsea Creek, and a few minutes later we were on our way to the shore.

As we landed we met the skipper of a barge who had passed us in the Wallet. "You've 'ad a tidy bit of sailin' to-day, ain't ye?" he remarked.

And I reckon we had. Sixteen hours of it and nothing to eat worth mentioning. Yes, I am afraid the Englishman does take his pleasures rather sadly sometimes.

It was nearly nine o'clock when we got our belated dinner, and I think I may say without any great departure from the truth that ample justice was done to the good fare set before us by mine host at the Swan. In the course of the meal my brother dropped in and seemed considerably relieved to find us, as he had been more than a little anxious as to our safety.

*Nora Creina* had sailed away from *Wave* from the very start, and we had seen nothing of her all day. We learnt from my brother that when the strong breeze set in he was round the Bar Buoy and consequently had a fair wind up Colne. Lowering away his mainsail and spreading the well-cover, he was able to run in to Brightlingsea in comparative comfort, and *Nora Creina* anchored safely in the Creek before noon. Thus, for the second time in the course of our short cruise were the advantages of having a fast boat demonstrated to us.

Our sail home to the Crouch the next day was pleasant but uneventful, and we picked up our moorings at Fambridge early in the afternoon. In spite of the rather trying time we had experienced both going to and returning from the Orwell, we had thoroughly enjoyed our trip in *Wave*, but all the same I vowed that I would not venture far outside



the river again until her well had been fitted with waterways and coamings. With that end in view I sailed her round to Paglesham at the end of the season, and left her in the hands of a shipwright to be thoroughly overhauled.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SALT-WATER CURE

"You must be mad" was the somewhat uncomplimentary verdict of my people when I announced my intention of going down to Paglesham to sail round to Fambridge. And I must admit that there was some justification for their remarks, as a yachting expedition in the month of February certainly seemed a rather drastic remedy for a severe cold and sore-throat that had confined me to the house for several days. But the shipwright to whom I had entrusted the job of fitting out my little boat had promised that she should be ready by a specified date, and having been divorced from my sport for three long dreary months I was not to be deterred from joining her by any petty ailments. And so on the appointed day, with a muffler round my neck, a thick overcoat, and a travelling rug, I set out for Burnham-on-Crouch *en route* for Paglesham.

When I left home the glass was falling ominously, and by the time I reached Burnham the weather had changed for the worse. It was raw and cold, and a driving mizzle of rain added to the feeling of general discomfort. Paglesham is not very easy of access from Burnham, for one must first

ferry over the Crouch, then walk across Wallasea Island, and finally take another ferry over Paglesham Creek. It is no great distance across the island, but there are many pit-falls to trap the unwary. The meadows are laced with ditches and dykes, spreading in all directions like the antennæ of some giant insect, and to a stranger these obstructions are very confusing. The dykes are both broad and deep, as I was presently to learn to my cost. It happened in this wise. In attempting to take a short cut I had wandered from the beaten track and lost myself. Whichever way I turned I was confronted by a broad dyke, and if I crossed a plank bridge, of which there were several, I merely found myself in a similar maze. Fortunately I knew in which direction Paglesham lay and hoped eventually to strike the bank of the creek. Owing to my sore-throat I had not smoked for several days, but, feeling in urgent need of the soothing influence of tobacco, I threw discretion to the winds and filled my pipe. But that pipe was not destined to be smoked, for, turning round to get a light, I saw a sight that I freely confess struck terror into my heart. From childhood's days I have had a deep-rooted fear of bulls and cows and there, to my horror, was a great white cow in hot chase. One hurried glance and I fled. Leaving my bag behind me, I ran as fast as I could, impeded as I was by a heavy overcoat, but fortunately a dyke was near at hand. I did not pause to think whether I could clear it, but took a flying leap. My feet landed on the very edge of the



opposite bank, and the earth crumbling beneath me I fell with a great splash backwards into the dyke. In a moment I had scrambled out on to dry land and was confronted by the ferryman, who, seeing me coming, had walked across a meadow to guide me. With ill-concealed mirth he told me that the cow was quite harmless and probably thought I had some food for her, as it was the custom during the winter months to feed them with mangel-wurzel. I turned and gazed at the brute and there she stood, calmly sniffing at my bag. Having retrieved my luggage for me, the man rowed me across the creek, and after a few minutes' walk I reached the inn at Paglesham. Changing into my sailing clothes, I left my wet things to be dried and went down to the river to see if the boat were ready.

*Wave* was afloat and that was all that could be said of her. Her ballast still remained in the shed and her mast was not even stepped. It was evident that the men had launched her and then stopped work for the day. As it was Saturday afternoon, and they would not again put in an appearance until Monday, I did not quite see how I was to take her to Fambridge on the morrow, but I was not going to give in without an effort. I therefore hastened to the shipwright's house and was lucky enough to catch him on the point of setting out for a bicycle ride. He was full of apologies, but nothing would induce him to do any more work on *Wave* that day. After debating the point with some little heat he consented to give me

the key of his shop, in which the boat's gear was stored, and let me do the work myself.

Presently I was joined by a young friend who had volunteered for the trip, and, although he knew nothing of boats, he contrived to make himself very useful. After he had helped me to step the mast, I set him to load up a smack's dinghy with ballast, whilst I busied myself with making and reeving new running gear. We worked on steadily until darkness put a stop to our labours. Our progress was excellent, and when we finally left the boat for the night she was nearly rigged. Still there was a good deal to be done on the morrow before we could start, as the sails had not been bent and the ballast, although all on board, had yet to be stowed. All this time the weather had been steadily growing worse, and an angry-looking sunset augured ill for our contemplated trip. The glass had fallen a full inch since the previous night, a sure sign of a heavy blow out of the south-west. But as the waters we had to sail were landlocked the prospect of a hard breeze did not trouble me much, and I was determined to make the passage whatever the weather conditions might be.

After sleeping at the inn we turned out at daybreak to find that the threatened storm had broken. It was blowing great guns, and huge masses of ragged-edged cloud chased each other across the horizon. It was altogether a wild morning, and I could see that we were in for a "dusting." The run of sea one meets with in the Crouch in heavy weather, under certain conditions

of wind and tide, is really astonishing. I have known a seven-tonner to roll her rail under whilst anchored at Fambridge, thirteen miles from the mouth. But it is the character rather than the size of the seas that renders them trying to small craft, and *Wave* was very small indeed, being but 16 ft. over all, with a maximum beam of 5 ft. She had originally been a small ship's boat, but the brig to which she belonged had laid her bones to rot upon the Gunfleet Sands. The boat had come ashore from the wreck undamaged and was purchased by a waterman, who fitted her with a false keel and converted her into a tiny yacht. She was a tubby little craft, and there was just room in the cabin for two to sleep on the floor. When I bought her the after-part of the boat was quite open, but a sixteen hours' passage from Pin Mill to Brightlingsea, against a strong wind and heavy sea, had convinced me of the need of some additional protection and I therefore had waterways and coamings fitted aft.

When we went on board the last of the ebb was still running to leeward and the water comparatively smooth, but I knew that when the flood began to make there would be a nasty sea in the reach. To stow the ballast at once was therefore imperative. We could not afford to waste a moment, and so decided to dispense with breakfast and make shift with what I had in my bag. This consisted of a pork pie and a flask of neat whisky, a villainous combination that, even at this distant date, causes



my gorge to rise at the mere thought. By ten o'clock all was ready, and under a close-reefed mainsail and storm jib we started on our journey.

The flood was now making up with some strength, and, meeting the wind, knocked up a nasty hollow sea. From the deck of a twenty-tonner the waves would probably not have appeared anything out of the way, but most things are comparative, and to us in the little *Wave* the sea seemed heavy. With boom eased right off she ran fast down the reach, hanging for a moment upon the crest of each wave before being hurled forward by the scend of the sea. Then we hauled round the point, and, laying over to the beam wind, fetched down to Branklet Spit on a broad reach. Off this Spit a succession of big seas are usually encountered in heavy weather, for here two tides meet, and as we hauled our sheets aboard for the beat up the Crouch we dashed into them. The little sloop leaped at the first like a chaser at a fence, flinging her bows high into the air, but ere she could get into her stride the next was upon her and she buried herself to the mast. Green water poured aft over decks and cabin top, drenching us to the skin, and for the next few minutes the boat was like a half-tide rock. Presently the sea became more regular in character and *Wave*, falling into the rhythm of the seas, began to make better weather of it. But misfortune followed in our wake and we soon received a check. As we approached the north shore of the Crouch the little boat was overpowered in a great squall and the jib

blown literally to shreds. With the loss of her headsail *Wave* got out of hand and drove ashore. Here was a pretty kettle of fish. Stranded as we were on a lee shore the seas broke right over us, and in the absence of a dinghy we had no means of laying out an anchor. It seemed to me that the only way to refloat her was to jump overboard and push her off—a rather undignified method perhaps, but eminently practical for all that.

Having bent on the second jib in readiness for setting, I, without a thought of my cold, jumped into the icy water up to my waist. To push her bow round until she filled on the other tack was the work of a moment, and she came off so fast that I was almost left behind. In my struggles to get on board I lost my footing and got thoroughly soused up to my neck, but I was so wet before that that did not trouble me much. I soon found that the change of jibs had upset the boat's balance, and thinking it better to be over-canvassed, rather than carry lee helm in such weather, I shook out a reef in the mainsail.

Sailing hard with her decks awash and a snoring tide beneath her, *Wave* made excellent progress, but as she smashed through the crests of the seas a continuous cloud of stinging spray poured aft into the well and wetted us as thoroughly as any shower bath. My young friend, despite a thick overcoat, was soon as wet as myself, and we had not, indeed, a dry thread between us. My companion's teeth chattered audibly, and the growing

pallor of his countenance foretold the early loss of his breakfast.

The anchorage at Burnham presented a wild scene as we sailed through. Yachts were dragging their ground tackle on either hand, whilst those that held on bravely to their moorings pitched bows under. One cutter had burst both cable and kedge warp and was driving stern first through the fleet. Had she not subsequently drifted foul of a mooring, to which her crew managed to make fast, she would certainly have gone ashore on the sea-wall and sustained heavy damage. In one little yacht, which had only been launched from her builder's yard the previous afternoon, was a party of visitors, who, having gone on board to inspect her in the evening, had been compelled to remain all night. Although I have an intimate knowledge of the Crouch, extending over a period of more than twenty years, I have never seen the river in such a state as it was on that wild February morning. As there was no prospect of finding a safe berth for *Wave* at Burnham, I saw no alternative but to fight our way up to Fambridge. So, hardening our hearts, we turned our backs on the anchorage and plugged on up river.

It was with feelings of relief that we passed Creeksea Ferry, for we were then able to ease our sheets for a reach of fully a mile. The wind being now well off shore the water was comparatively smooth; so, relinquishing the helm to my friend, I seized the opportunity to bail out some of the



water that lay deep in the lee bilge. With covering board just awash, *Wave* fled up Cliff Reach like a frightened stag, and this part of the trip was all too short. A few minutes later, however, we swung round the point and met the wind almost end-on in a furious squall. The yacht was hove down until the water poured in a cascade over the lee coamings into the well. She was almost on her beam-ends and hung for a moment as if in doubt whether to turn turtle or not. With the thought in my mind that her ballast might shift and fall bodily to leeward, I jumped to the mainsheet and let it go with a run. The boat, almost water-logged, slowly righted and we started to bail vigorously with buckets as she drove across the river with her foresail aback. The Reach presented a stormy scene. The seas seemed to have no foot to them and curled over and broke. The wind blew the tops off the waves and white horses chased each other the whole length of the Reach. Down to leeward the seas broke against the sea-wall, and clouds of spray leapt high into the air. Presently we got going again and beat away up the river, but in the short hollow seas the boat was as wet as a submarine. Masses of icy water flew aft from the weather bow and slapped us rudely in the face until we fairly gasped for breath. But yard by yard we won our way and eventually reached Fambridge just at the turn of the tide.

To bring up in such a breeze was no easy matter, and it was more by luck than judgment that we

managed to pick up a mooring. But it would not hold us, and we began to drag rapidly down the Reach. I dropped the anchor, but still we dragged, and I thought we should have to get under way again. Fortunately we drifted close to a mooring buoy, and, grabbing it with the boathook, soon had the chain on board. This proved to be the mooring of a ten-tonner and we were now securely anchored. The little *Wave*, however, was performing the wildest antics, rolling and pitching like a mad thing. To stow the sails was a difficult matter and ere it was completed I fell overboard. I was so numbed with cold, and weighed down by my sodden clothes, that I could not climb on board without assistance from my companion, and even then it was with some little difficulty that I regained the boat. This second ducking was the last straw, and I was as anxious to get ashore as my friend, who was feeling very ill; but we had no dinghy and there was not a soul about. We shouted and blew the foghorn for a matter of two hours ere we attracted attention; but this was not altogether surprising as the land near the river was in flood, owing to a large breach in the sea-wall, and the nearest houses were a quarter of a mile distant. At last we saw some one climb on to the roof of a barn and wave his arm to us and we knew that we were seen. We sat shivering in the wet cabin for another half-hour before two sailing friends of mine appeared on the sea-wall. They had made a perilous trip across the floods in a crazy old shooting-punt, and, although

in their shore clothes, started at once to launch a boat and come to our assistance. But no sooner was their boat afloat than she was blown away down the river and they were compelled to land on the mud far to leeward. Time after time they made the attempt, each time in a different dinghy, with a like result, and there was soon quite a flotilla of dinghies anchored on the edge of the mud some two hundred yards below us. Then they got the ferry-boat and with much labour dragged it over the mud for about a hundred yards to windward before launching. This was the sixth attempt, and, as they were using the last available boat, we watched their movements with anxiety. Bows on to wind and tide they rowed their hardest, straining every muscle to reach *Wave*. Would they do it? No! they had just missed and we were plunged into the depths of despair. Then we saw them fetch *Gertie*—a five-tonner moored about fifty yards astern—and our spirits rose again. I unrove the peak halyards and mainsheet, and, bending on a lifebuoy to the end, floated it down to them on the tide. They secured the buoy and made fast the rope to their boat. Then with a cheer we hauled her up to *Wave*, and at last, after waiting for four hours, we had established communication with the shore. We tumbled into the boat without loss of time, landed on the mud a quarter of a mile below the hard, and waded through the slimy ooze to the sea-wall. My young friend was past caring about anything and walked through the soft mud in his



socks, without even taking the trouble to turn up his trousers, whilst all four of us were wet to the skin. Strange to relate, however, my cold had disappeared and my throat was completely cured.

## CHAPTER XV

### BRINGING HOME THE BOAT

THE autumn has come to be regarded by yachtsmen as the most favourable season of the year for the purchase of a new vessel, as it is generally supposed that an owner anxious to dispose of his boat will then accept a comparatively low price in order to save the expense of laying her up for the winter. Whether this theory is based upon fact or merely a popular fallacy is open to question, but there is no doubt that a large number of yachts—notably small craft—change hands at the fall of the year. The yachtsman who buys a boat in the autumn, however, is apt to forget that he may incur considerable expense in getting his new purchase round to his home waters, particularly if she be lying at a distant port. If he be wise he will leave her where she is until the following spring, when fine weather may be expected for the trip; but the average Corinthian yachtsman is far too keen on his sport to possess his soul in patience for a matter of four or five months, and usually wants to play with his new toy at once. But small yachts of four or five tons measurement, being designed for summer sailing, are seldom suitably rigged for passage-making in the winter, and

the little vessel may be weather-bound in some port *en route* for weeks together. If a waterman has been engaged to sail the boat to her future headquarters, such delay, of course, makes for expense, and by the time she arrives at her destination a considerable sum has been added to the initial cost of purchase. The owner, if he have sufficient leisure, may elect to sail the boat round himself, and as he is not likely to be so careful in selecting his weather as the professional, it is quite possible that he may get a rare "dusting" in the process. Looking back down a vista of years, I can recall to mind a good many rough experiences in the way of passage-making during the autumn and winter; but one in particular, although a comparatively short trip, stands out prominently in my memory. It happened in this wise.

A good many years ago, more indeed than I care to think about, I was persuaded to assist a young friend in taking a small boat from Greenhithe to Fambridge-on-Crouch. The craft had been given to my friend by a gentleman who had no further use for her, and although the time of year was most unsuitable for such a trip, her new owner was anxious to get her round to his home waters. Being at that time a comparative novice and unacquainted with the mouth of the Thames, he sought my services as pilot, and in a moment of weakness I rashly consented to accompany him. And so, one Saturday afternoon in October, we journeyed to Greenhithe to join the *Heron*. She proved to be a little clinker-built canoe-yawl of some



18 ft. in length, with a beam of about 5 ft. 6 in. She had a tiny cabin with a lifting roof, under which, when raised, one could just sit upright. She was yawl-rigged, and had perhaps 15 in. of freeboard. The boat was, in fact, of about as undesirable a type for an autumn trip round the Whittaker as one could imagine.

The *Heron* had not been used for some little time, and we found the gear in a horrid tangle. This caused some little delay in starting, and it was after four o'clock when we slipped from our moorings just above the training ship *Worcester*. There was a light westerly breeze, and with the aid of an ebb tide we made fair progress. Gravesend Reach is usually interesting an hour or two after high water, for one sees vessels of every type and tonnage wending their way seawards on the ebb. That afternoon it presented a particularly animated scene. Out in the tideway were steamers great and small, intermingled with square-rigged sailing ships following in the wake of fussy little tugs. Barges innumerable threaded their way 'midst the maze of traffic, their red-brown sails brilliantly lit up by the setting sun, adding a pleasing splash of colour to the picture. Over by the Tilbury shore a small flotilla of bawley boats trawled down the Reach, a strong odour of cooking shrimps bearing witness to the success of their fishing. With the assistance of a snoring tide the little *Heron* soon left this stirring scene astern, but with a failing breeze the prospect of saving our daylight

into Hole Haven, where we proposed to pass the night, was a remote one. As darkness closed in upon us we hugged the Essex shore to keep out of the way of the traffic, and presently the Mucking Light cast its ruddy beams across the face of the waters. Away to starboard the lights of passing vessels moved in ghostly fashion, whilst we, now quite becalmed, laboured strenuously at the oar, with supper and a bed at the Lobster Smack Inn as our objective. As we neared the Haven a smart breeze suddenly filled in from the north-west, and in a few minutes the little yawl was rushing through the Stygian waters with her lee decks awash. Gathering in the sheets we laid her head for the Haven, and, hugging the eastern side of the entrance, crossed the bar and brought up just above the hard. Having roughly stowed the sails we hailed a Dutch eel *schuift* anchored near by, and one of her crew rowed off to put us ashore.

After passing the night beneath the hospitable roof of the Lobster Smack, we turned out next morning at dawn to continue our journey to Farnbridge. It was too early to procure breakfast at the inn, and, rather than waste the ebb, which was already coming down, we decided to make shift with a pork pie that we had brought with us in case of emergencies. We found the causeway deserted, and as, so far as we could see, there was no dinghy available, the problem of how to reach the *Heron* seemed to defy solution. Then we

thought of the coastguard, and, hastening to the look-out hut, asked the man on duty if he could put us on board. Luckily, he knew where there was an old boat, and in a few minutes the three of us were hauling a crazy old craft over the sea-wall. As the boat had been out of water for many months, and her seams had opened, it was doubtful if she would float, but the *Heron* was lying near at hand, and we decided to risk it. When we left the hard, the water began to pour in through every seam, but by putting our feet up on the gunwale, we contrived to keep comparatively dry. Our friendly coastguard, however, was not so fortunate. As he pulled lustily for the hard, after putting us on board, the boat sank lower and lower in the water, and, finally disappearing from view, left the luckless "man in blue" to wade ashore for some ten yards.

After a frugal breakfast, consisting of a hunk of pork pie, washed down with a cup of "fair water"—as the poet hath it—we set about getting under way. The morning was not altogether inviting, being cold and cheerless, whilst a mizzle of rain threatened to speedily wet us to the skin. Great clumps of cloud chased one another across the sky, and the wind came in angry little squalls out of the south-west. But, anxious to save our tide round the Whittaker, we set the whole mainsail, and were soon roaring down the tideway towards Southend. When off Leigh, the wind increased in strength, and, fearing to carry on any longer, we



lowered the mainsail and pulled down a reef, the boat meanwhile running under mizzen and jib. By the time the mainsail was reefed and set again, we were below Southend Pier, and the wind had increased so much that the little yawl had more canvas than she wanted, even under her reduced sail. Finding the boat very wild on her helm, we furled the mizzen on the mast, and for a while she travelled more comfortably. As we approached the Maplin Lighthouse, however, it began to blow really hard, and we lowered the mainsail again whilst we considered our position. There was now no turning back, for to beat over a Thames ebb in a boat like the *Heron* was out of the question. It was obvious that we must "face the music," so we close-reefed the mainsail, and hardened our hearts for a "dusting." As we entered the Swin we met the young flood, which soon knocked up an ugly sea. The waves were short and hollow, and steering became anxious work. The little boat would hang on the crest of every sea, and then rush forward midst seething foam, which sizzled along her topsides, and frequently curled over on to the after-deck. Every moment she threatened to broach-to, and time after time we narrowly escaped disaster. Near the Lightship we met a 10-ton cutter beating up for Port Victoria, and, as she hove up her bows to the head sea, her forefoot and several feet of her keel were plainly visible. The water poured off her decks in a regular cascade, and a continuous shower of spray pattered on the glistening oilskins of her

crew. As we watched her crashing through the seas, we thought with dismay of what lay before us when we should haul our wind to beat up the Whittaker Channel.

We rounded the Beacon in a blinding rain squall, and as we gathered in the sheets the *Heron* buried herself to the coamings. At the same moment a wave broke over the boat, and a seething torrent rushed across the cabin top into the well. Already the water swished about our ankles, and the thought crossed my mind that if she shipped a few more seas like that, our craft would be swamped.

“Bail!” I shouted to my companion.

“What with?” he yelled.

As if in reply to his question, his felt hat floated out from the cabin, and was immediately pressed into service.

Fortunately, the squall soon eased up, and the *Heron* ceased to take water on board except in the form of spray, which flew aft continuously from the weather bow. What progress we made it was impossible to say, as all marks were blotted out by the heavy rain. Our only compass was a little pocket toy, and, as the card revolved like a thing demented, it was quite useless, and our navigation was little more than guess-work. On the Buxey side of the Channel the yawl refused to “stay,” and we consequently had to wear her every other board. Then we discovered that the boat was working, and she began to leak like a sieve. Hour after hour my companion bailed until his hat was in the last



“As we watched her crashing through the seas, we thought with dismay  
of what lay before us.”





stages of disintegration, yet he could only just keep the water under. There were no doors to the little cabin, and our shore-going clothes kept washing out into the well and impeding the bailing operations. Once, in the trough of the sea, we bumped on the Whittaker Sand, and, had the *Heron* missed stays when I put her about, this yarn would never have been written. But Providence takes care of foolhardy youngsters who go down to the sea in two-tonners, and she came off in safety.

Our only hope now was to keep the *Heron* going until there was water over the Buxey Sands, when we could make a beam wind of it to Brightlingsea. Wet through and cold, with an aching void in our stomachs, and parched with thirst, the prospect was a miserable one. Fortunately, however, we were not called upon to put the idea into practice, for suddenly the wind backed to the southward and the rain ceased. We found we were between the Ridge and West Buxey buoys, and, to our great relief, could now lay a course into the Crouch. This shift of wind completely altered the aspect of affairs, for with eased sheets, we rapidly drew into the land. Although frequent bailing was still necessary, our troubles were at an end, and in less than an hour we were in the Crouch, making short miles of it to our destination, which we reached without further misadventure.

Our clothes were, of course, utterly ruined, and the boat herself never quite recovered from the strain. But we were only too thankful to get

safely into port, and although we have since had many an exciting trip in small boats, this autumn passage round the Whittaker Beacon, which is six miles from the nearest land, stands out in our memories as the most foolhardy adventure in which we ever engaged.



## CHAPTER XVI

### “ SNIPE ”

I COVETED *Snipe* the very first time I saw her. She looked such a powerful little ship as she came beating up Fambridge Reach in the hard southwest breeze, and sloshed through the short seas in such convincing style that I then and there registered a vow that I would some day own her. And sure enough I did, although it was not until a year later.

My desire for a canoe-yacht dated, I think, from my first reading a little book entitled *Cruises in Small Yachts and Big Canoes*, a delightful volume that I am not even now too *blasé* to enjoy. The accounts of the cruises made in *Viper* by the author, Mr. H. F. Speed, fired my imagination, and I was quite determined that by hook or by crook I would some day have a boat of similar type. *Snipe*, so far as I could judge from seeing her under way, was an improved *Viper*, and promised to have infinitely better accommodation below decks.

Unfortunately she was not for sale at that time, and so I had to possess my soul in patience and wait until her owner tired of her. Although she left the Crouch to take up her quarters at Pin Mill shortly after I had seen her, I made frequent inquiries about her from friends who sailed on the

Orwell. At last my persistency was rewarded, for I learnt that *Snipe's* owner had bought a big yawl.

Although I did not know in the least whether he proposed to part with *Snipe* I thought it worth while going to Pin Mill to see him. At first he declined to sell the boat, saying that he meant to keep her for sailing about in the river, but I stuck to him all the afternoon like the proverbial leech, and in the end bought her for £35, an absurdly low price for a smart little cruiser barely four years old. And I did not grudge him the extra £4 I paid for a 7-ft. Berthon dinghy almost new.

*Snipe* was designed and built by Pengelly and Gore, of Teignmouth, in 1895, and that they made a good job of her is evident from the fact that she is still quite sound and tight after more than twenty years' constant use. Her principal dimensions are, length over all, 18 ft.; beam, 6 ft.; and draught, 3 ft. 6 in.; and with 26 cwt. of iron ballast, half on the keel and half inside in the form of pigs, she is as stiff as a church. She is planked with red pine on a frame of oak, and has good freeboard and a particularly nice midship section. Her decks are of pine, laid in narrow planks set off with teak covering board and coamings, and the low cabin-top is covered with canvas painted white for the sake of coolness. She is sloop-rigged with Turner's patent reefing gear on the mainsail and originally had a roller foresail, but that I soon discarded as I regard such a contrivance, when set upon a bowsprit, as an abomination in a cruising boat. The

total sail area was 234 sq. ft., without the topsail, which has been added since I sold her.

*Snipe's* cabin is really astonishing for such a small boat. One can sit upright comfortably on the sofa bunks, which are not unduly close to the floor, and still have several inches to spare over one's head; but when I bought her the cabin was very sparsely furnished. It contained little more than two folding cots attached to the sides of the boat and bunk cushions covered with Willesden canvas. Nothing, therefore, stood in the way of fitting her up to my liking, and when finished I was proud of the result.

The sofa cushions I had covered with red pegamoid and the folding cots with dark blue art serge. The cabin was divided off from the fo'c'stle with dark blue curtains held back with red silk ribbon. A dark blue tablecloth, embroidered at the corners with old gold silk, covered a neat little table, whilst a red silk shade hung above the gimballed cabin lamp, which was attached to the mast. On the floor were Turkey rugs, and red silk curtains covered the little windows in the coamings. The cots, which had horsehair mattresses, were most comfortable to sleep in, and when folded back during the day made soft backs to the sofas. At the end of one of the sofas was a useful cupboard fitted up as a pantry, and the stoves and cooking utensils were stowed away out of sight in the fo'c'stle. In the centre of the cabin-top I fitted a brass mushroom ventilator, which kept the cabin well aired without letting in the rain. Other



fittings I put in were a bookshelf, a pipe-rack, a small cellarette to hold three or four bottles, and a glass rack, and on the coaming at the fore-end of the cabin were placed an eight-day clock and an aneroid to match. A heavy spittoon, kept under the table, made a splendid ash tray, for which purpose it was solely used.

As the yacht was quite tight and had considerable rise of floor the lockers under the bunks were really useful, and in them I stowed such articles as tinned provisions, bottled ale, the chart case, burgees, and various other things that are usually awkward to house. For fresh water I used a two-gallon beer-jar of stoneware, which was fitted with a tap and a handle for carrying purposes. This jar was lashed at the end of one of the well seats, and I found it far more satisfactory than any tank or breaker. A small well-tent proved useful in wet weather for washing up and cooking when at anchor, and also enabled me to procure privacy for dressing when in a crowded harbour. A semi-rotary pump on the bulkhead could be worked with one hand whilst steering, if necessary, but as a matter of fact was seldom used except after heavy rain. A large locker in the stern accommodated spare sails and warps and the kedje stowed away nicely under the well floor. The riding light, when not in use, was lashed to the heel of the mast on the fore side, so that it was out of the way, and the binnacle was shipped on the bulkhead in a position convenient to the helmsman. In the well there were lockers both under the seats and beneath the side decks,

and one I used as a larder, boring holes in the door for purposes of ventilation.

When I bought the boat her topsides were painted white, which accentuated her generous freeboard and gave her a rather tubby appearance, but I had her burnt off and enamelled black, which, with a gold line to set it off, made her look much smarter and more shapely. The sails, although in quite good condition, did not set to my liking and so I had a new suit made by Cranfield, of Burnham, which set to perfection. The old sails were dressed with oil and ochre for use in the winter. I discarded the roller foresail, and also scrapped the rigging screws, substituting wire lanyards in their place.

When the alterations were completed *Snipe* was as smart a little cruiser as one could wish for, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more snug and homely than her cabin. Of the score of boats I have owned she still retains first place in my affections, and I have never ceased to regret the day when I yielded to temptation and accepted an offer of practically twice what I had paid for her.

Accompanied by a friend I joined *Snipe* at Pin Mill one day in May with the idea of going for a short cruise before taking her home to Fambridge. The alterations which I have described had not been then carried out, and as the boat was very short of necessary cabin gear we had to take a good deal of luggage with us. When we arrived at Ipswich and saw it all collected together on the platform we looked at the pile with dismay. In

addition to two portmanteaux full of clothes, there were two large kit-bags containing blankets and bedding, a riding light, binnacle and compass, lead and line, a case of provisions, a two-gallon stone jar for water, a case of charts, two Primus stoves, various cooking utensils, and sundry odds and ends of which the exact nature is not recorded in my old log-book. And I still had to pick up a kedge and warp ordered by post.

How to get all this gear down to Pin Mill was something of a problem. To take it by water was out of the question as the steamer does not stop at Pin Mill, merely slowing down to drop passengers into the ferry-boat. In the end we decided to charter a cab, and with our luggage piled high on the roof of a decrepit old fly we made the six-mile journey by road.

We found *Snipe* lying at moorings on the very outskirts of the anchorage, so leaving our luggage on the hard, we put off in the little Berthon dinghy with the idea of bringing the yacht down to a berth close to the causeway. Our tiny collapsible dinghy looked more like half a walnut shell than anything else, but carried us bravely. Indeed, we subsequently discovered that she would take three men of average weight in safety, provided that the water was quite smooth and nobody sneezed.

As soon as we were on board I slipped the mooring, and unrolling the foresail dropped down to the hard. Not being acquainted with the river, however, I stood in too close and *Snipe* took the mud. The tide was ebbing fast and our efforts to refloat



her proving unsuccessful we had to abandon all thoughts of starting that day. Having laid out the anchor, we proceeded to get our gear on board, an operation that necessitated a good many trips in the little dinghy, and by the time we had done this *Snipe* had assumed a pronounced list. Seeing that there would be no comfort on board until she floated again, we went ashore to do some necessary shopping in the village and have tea at the picturesque waterside inn.

It was late in the evening ere *Snipe* floated again, and by the time we had shifted her into deeper water and roughly stowed our gear it was ten o'clock. We therefore turned in, fully intending to make an early start on the morrow. The accommodation seemed positively palatial after the pill-box cabin of the little *Wave* to which we had been accustomed, and the canvas cots were most comfortable. So much so, indeed, that we did not wake until nearly ten o'clock the following morning and so missed our tide. We did not mind very much, however, as there was a flat calm, and even if we had left on the last of the ebb, as we had intended, we probably should not have got very far down the river. So we dallied with our breakfast and enjoyed the glorious scenery.

Pin Mill is probably the most beautiful spot on the East Coast. Both shores of the river are densely wooded to the very water's edge, the upper reaches of the Orwell being not unlike the Dart or Fal. Pin Mill, indeed, bears a strong resemblance to King Harry's Ferry on the latter river, and it



is a pleasant surprise to find such scenery in East Anglia. It is an ideal anchorage for small yachts, which can lie in a little bay under the shore of Woolverstone Park out of the way of passing traffic.

We devoted the rest of the morning to setting up the rigging and overhauling the gear generally. After lunch, when the tide had turned, we got under way bound for Felixstowe Dock, where I had arranged to meet one of the Fambridge boats with which we proposed to cruise in company. The breeze was light and rather flukey, as it usually is above Collimer Point, and for a time our progress was slow. But when at last we got clear of the trees, and felt the true breeze, *Snipe* began to mend her pace. I was pleased to find that she went to windward very well and handled beautifully, and was delighted with my new ship. So much so, indeed, that I had not the heart to go into the dock when we approached the entrance, and so we sailed about Harwich Harbour for an hour or more ere we turned into the dock to look for our friend. "There she is," cried my companion as we opened out the basin, and it needed but a glance to identify the *Pride of the Crouch*, as some wag had dubbed her, lying in the tier at the top of the dock, for she was painted a brilliant green. Lowering our mainsail and rolling up the foresail, we carried just sufficient way to a vacant berth alongside, and in ten minutes *Snipe* was moored securely. But where was the owner of the *Pride*? He was not on board, although his clothes were—hanging over the boom and dripping with water—whilst a pair

of brown shoes did sentry-go on the cabin-top. It was obvious that these were my friend's shore-going clothes, for the costume he wore when sailing was of the useful rather than ornamental order.

“I see him,” exclaimed my companion, and looking up I saw my old friend standing up in his diminutive dinghy which he was wangling across the dock towards us.

Known to the sporting Press as “The Genial Harry,” he is perhaps better known to his intimate friends as “Doggy,” on account of a taste he formerly had for dog-racing. In the days of his youth he was wont to repair to Kensal Rise, where, in the company of the *élite* of the dog-racing fraternity, he would shout encouragement to a much-beloved whippet. He had retired from that aristocratic sport some years before I made his acquaintance, but was still subject to relapses, and on one such occasion I joined him.

At that time we were living together in rooms at Fambridge, and he owned what he was pleased to call a dog, an extraordinary animal which he had acquired for a few shillings from the Dogs' Home to save it from the lethal chamber. I suppose it really was a dog, although I cannot say that I ever saw another like it. Its body was that of a small greyhound, but its coat was long—as also was its tail—whilst it had the head of a terrier. A queer-looking animal certainly, but there was no denying Sailor's running powers, and his owner was thirsting to pit him against other dogs. An opportunity soon presented itself, a terrier coursing meeting



being advertised to take place at Burnham on Boxing Day. Doggy, therefore, decided to take Sailor and enter for any course that might be open to him.

Any one who saw us walking up to the station on the morning of the meeting might have thought we were bound upon a poaching expedition, for there was nothing about Sailor to suggest a competitor in a sporting contest. His owner, ever simple in his tastes, eschewed such vanities as dog-collars, but as Sailor was somewhat given to roving, he had thought it expedient to take steps to ensure his safe arrival at the coursing venue. With this end in view he had secured the dog with a short length of old frayed-out clothes line, at the end of which Sailor slunk behind us with his long tail between his legs.

The dog had evidently been trained by some previous owner in the art of travelling without a ticket, and as soon as the carriage door was opened he jumped in and, disappearing beneath the seat, remained there until we reached our destination. There was quite a crowd on the platform at Burnham, and terriers of all sorts and sizes strained at the leash and snapped at one another. The advent of Sailor created something of a sensation, and there was much merriment when Doggy hauled him out on the end of the clothes line.

"What are you laughing at, you idiots?" said Doggy indignantly. "The dog's all right; he's had his breakfast."

This made them laugh more than ever, and there

was much banter as we pushed through the crowd and made our way to the meadow where the coursing was to take place.

When Doggy presented himself before the Committee and asked permission to enter his dog, he was received with broad smiles. “Where is the dog?” they inquired.

“Why, this is the dog, of course,” said Doggy, hauling the wretched Sailor forward by the head.

The smiles of the Committee gave place to audible titters which finally merged into a roar of laughter.

“What do you call it?” some one gasped at last.

“Call it?” shouted Doggy. “Don’t you know a Japanese boarhound when you see one?”

“Ah, a most interesting specimen,” said the President of the Club, “but, you see, this meeting is confined to terriers and there is no class for boarhounds. But,” he added, “if you can find another dog anything like him we shall be pleased to arrange a match for them.”

This seemed a rather forlorn hope as Sailor was unique among dogs, but perseverance was in the end rewarded, for late in the afternoon he was matched against Buller, the property of a local sportsman, to run a course for a shilling a side, the loser to take the rabbit. Buller was not in the least like Sailor, being a sort of long-legged bull-terrier with plum-pudding spots all over him, but the Committee evidently thought the match would afford a diverting wind-up to the meeting.

The start could hardly be described as a good

one, as the dogs seemed to be under the impression that fighting was the business on hand, and the rabbit, therefore, got away with a useful lead. But when at last they thought fit to give chase, Sailor ran like a greyhound and was hard upon the heels of the quarry when the latter disappeared into the ditch on the far side of the large meadow. The yelping Sailor leapt in in hot pursuit and stayed there, oblivious to the fact that the rabbit had come out again and fallen a prey to the more wily Buller. Thus was the truth of the old aphorism that the race is not always to the swift once more exemplified.

Then, from the outskirts of the crowd, appeared a small boy who seized the rabbit and made off with it. Now, it will be remembered that by the terms of the match the rabbit fell to the loser, and Doggy, seeing his property being carried away, gave vent to a roar of rage and dashed off in pursuit. The boy, if small, was extremely agile and led Doggy a pretty dance in and out of the crowd, through ditches and over stiles until, realising that his capture was imminent, he dropped the spoil and made off in the gathering dusk. Every one agreed that it was the prettiest course of the day, and Doggy received quite an ovation as he returned from the chase carrying the much-mauled rabbit by its hind legs.

Having rescued Sailor, minus half an ear, from the centre of a dog fight of Homeric proportions, we made our way homewards to eat the rabbit for supper, and thus ended my first and only experience of the noble sport of dog-racing.



“ Well,” remarked Doggy, as he drew up his chair to the fire, “ they say that there is a silver lining to every cloud. Although I lost my shilling I got the rabbit, which was worth at least ninepence, and you can’t expect to get a good day’s sport for much less than threepence, can you ? ”

## CHAPTER XVII

### CRUISING IN "SNIPE"

WE must now return to Felixstowe Dock, across which, it will be remembered, Doggy was wangling his little dinghy when I was seduced into that long digression on dog-racing in the last chapter. When he joined us we at once questioned him as to the meaning of so much of his clothing being hung out to dry, and after a little persuasion he told us the whole story.

It appeared that in the course of the morning he had walked over to Felixstowe town, which is some distance from the dock, and whilst there had met some friends—an elderly lady and her extremely pretty and attractive daughter. On the spur of the moment he had invited them to drive over to the dock in the afternoon and have tea with him on the *Pride*, an invitation which was readily accepted. The remainder of the morning he had spent in making preparations to receive his guests, as the appointments of the *Pride's* cabin were of a nature that might almost be described as Spartan. The purchase of a few little refinements, such as a tablecloth and some cups and saucers, was therefore a matter of urgent necessity, and having procured what he deemed requisite,

Doggy hurried back to the boat to prepare the cabin for the reception of visitors.

Those who knew the cabin of the *Pride* in those days will, I think, agree that it afforded considerable scope for talent in that direction, as it was but little suited to social amenities. It was divided practically into two by a huge iron centre-plate case, not altogether guiltless of rust, whilst the somewhat shabby sofa cushions might have been stuffed with granite for all the comfort they afforded. The sole furniture consisted of a beer-bottle crate with a roughly-made lid, which enjoyed the courtesy title of table. But Doggy did his best, and, what with a white cloth hiding the primitive nature of the table, the new cups and saucers, a plateful of fancy cakes, and some cut flowers in a marmalade pot, the cabin was made to look quite gay and homely. But the fates decreed that that tea-party should not take place.

When he saw his visitors arrive on the quay, Doggy rowed off in the dinghy to fetch them, attired, of course, in his best shore-going clothes. The dinghy unfortunately was not only very small, but also very crank and totally inadequate for a pleasure party. Fully aware of its shortcomings, he was careful to impress upon his friends the necessity for caution, and for the sake of safety proposed to take off the mother first and then come back for the daughter.

Holding on to the edge of the slippery pontoon with one hand, he held out the other gallantly to assist the lady. "Step well into the middle of



the boat," he warned her. The lady did. In fact she stepped out so bravely as to land almost on the opposite gunwale, and the result was both startling and disastrous.

For a moment nothing was to be seen on the face of the waters but an overturned boat and a straw hat. Doggy's head emerged almost immediately, but seeing that his companion in misfortune was still under water and evidently foul of either the boat or the pontoon, he dived at once in search of her.

In the meantime, the daughter was in hysterics on top of the pontoon, whilst a slightly inebriated soldier surveyed the proceedings with interest from the quay above.

When Doggy reappeared with the unfortunate lady the first words he heard came from the soldier, who called out—

"That's right, Gov'nor; drown the old woman first."

And having proffered this sapient advice, the representative of His Majesty's Army turned upon his heel, and made a bee-line for the four-ale bar of the Pier Hotel.

Fortunately the weather was warm and the old lady suffered no ill-effects from her accident, although she had to remain in bed at the hotel for some hours whilst her daughter drove over to the town to procure dry clothing for her.

It was after eight o'clock the following morning when I turned out to find the young flood already making. A slight haze hung over Harwich Har-

bour, and there was not sufficient wind to raise a ripple on the water. Getting under way was obviously out of the question, and having decided to defer starting until high water, we set about getting breakfast in leisurely fashion. Felixstowe Dock was in those days a very pleasant, comfortable berth for a small yacht, as it was not then used as a coaling station for destroyers, but it was not altogether without its disadvantages. Perhaps the main drawback was that one could not bathe. I have seen men swimming about in the dock occasionally, but personally I cannot fancy bathing in an artificial basin, as all the refuse of the surrounding district seems to collect in such places. If we had had a larger dinghy we might have rowed out into the harbour for a morning dip, but my tiny Berthon boat was far too small for such a purpose, and we came to the conclusion that sufficient bathing had already been done from the *Pride's* dinghy. After breakfast Doggy walked over to Felixstowe to see his friends, whilst we loafed about ashore waiting for the turn of the tide.

At high water we slipped from our moorings and made our way slowly out of the dock with the aid of a sweep. There was insufficient wind to keep the sails asleep, but the ebb was now running hard down the Felixstowe shore carrying us out to Landguard Point. I wonder why it is a drifting boat always seems to prefer travelling sideways, or even stern first? A sailing boat going stern first is, to my mind, about as undignified a spectacle as a motor-cycle being pushed; but rowing a heavy

boat beneath a sweltering sun is a weariness to the flesh, and we soon desisted from our labours and let *Snipe* drift whither she listed. Despite the calm there was the usual jabble of sea on the Rolling Ground and the little boat rolled abominably. Pots and pans in the fo'c'stle kept up an indescribable din and the boom banged viciously from side to side. All the time I had to sit on deck with my legs over the side holding off the dinghy, which nestled up to *Snipe* like a day-old chick to its mother.

Presently a black line spread across the face of the waters indicating the advent of a breeze. It gradually grew nearer and nearer, and then the mainsail gave a final bang and went to sleep. The boat gathered way and began to discourse sweet music as her bow cleft the water. Soon we were passing Bawdsey Haven, with its treacherous bar and the late Sir Cuthbert Quilter's big house standing out prominently on the point. This imposing mansion, which forms a useful sea-mark, seems to stand upon a rocky cliff, but the rocks, it is said, are artificial. Be that as it may, the effect from the sea is very fine, and if one lands for a closer inspection one will find a most glorious rock garden that is well worth a visit.

We were bound for Aldeburgh by way of the River Ore, which for nine miles runs almost parallel with the coast. With a nice little breeze on the quarter it did not take us very long getting to Shingle Street, where this extraordinary river empties itself into the sea. In fact, we reached the entrance too soon, as the tide was still ebbing strongly. Orford



Haven, with its shifting bar of shingle and strong tides, is, I think, the most treacherous harbour entrance on the East Coast, and a pilot is almost a necessity. Approaching as near as we dared, we hoisted our pilot jack and hove-to, but to our chagrin nobody took the slightest notice. So we jilled about off the entrance tootling lustily on the fog-horn to attract attention; but an hour or more had elapsed ere we saw a small white boat put out under a lugsail. It was the pilot at last and in a few minutes he was alongside. He explained that he had seen our signal, but to have come off before would have been useless, as, despite the fair wind, we should not have been able to stem the tide, which at spring runs something like seven knots on the first of the ebb. Having made fast the pilot's boat astern of *Snipe*, we let the foresail draw and headed for the entrance.

Orford Haven is a weird place. Great heaps of shingle and broken water are the predominant features and the tide runs like a mill-race. Ashore there is a row of cottages and an inn, but nothing else to mark the entrance to this inhospitable haven. There are certainly some small beacons on the beach to act as leading marks, but they are difficult to locate, and the yachtsman who attempts the entrance without a pilot risks his life and property. The channel changes so frequently that even the local craft employ the pilots, although the fee is five shillings or more according to the draught of the vessel. Our pilot warned us that he could not take us very far in on the ebb, but with a

leading wind thought he could coax *Snipe* into a berth where she would lie comfortably until the flood made. Presently we were creeping along the edge of the steep-to shingle bank, the motion of the boat through the water causing the shingle to fall in. Even in fine weather there are overfalls in the entrance, and during the winter gales it is a hell of seething water. Under such conditions the pilots do not attempt to put off to vessels, but wave them in with flags from the shore. Keeping within a few feet of the shingle bank, where the tide was comparatively slack, we contrived to get just inside the entrance, but when we met the full force of the tide the boat began to drop back, and there was no alternative but to anchor. This we accordingly did, paying out our whole scope of chain. The little boat rode uneasily in the strong tideway, sheering about wildly, and the dinghy which lay astern cocked her nose out of the water as if she were being towed by a fast motor launch. After the pilot had left us we had tea and then, as we should have to wait some time for the flood, decided to go ashore.

Hauling the dinghy alongside we got in cautiously and pushed off. I kept the boat's head well up to the tide, and rowing for all I was worth we gradually worked our way shorewards, losing less ground than I anticipated. When the keel of the dinghy grated on the shingle, I jumped out with the painter on to the steep-to shore. To my dismay, the shingle slid away from under my feet and I sprawled full length. I could feel myself sliding

back into the water, and it was only by a great effort with hands and feet that I managed to save myself. After crawling cautiously for a few yards over the treacherous shingle, I found firmer ground, and was able to stand up and hold the dinghy painter taut for the assistance of my companion, who soon joined me. Then we walked towards the cottages we had seen as we entered the Haven.

The first person we met was the Coastguard officer, who seemed delighted at finding some one to talk to. He took us into his cottage and regaled us with bottled ale, telling us many strange things about the place. Every change of wind, he informed us, affected the entrance and the channel constantly altered. The entrance, he said, had not changed materially for some months, but there were indications that it would soon shift further to the north. This proved to be correct, for when I visited Shingle Street a few weeks later, the entrance was fully half a mile to the northward of where it had been when we first entered the Haven. The old channel had closed up altogether, a great bank of shingle perhaps 30 ft. high filling the gap. When we left our Coastguard friend he half filled our dinghy with vegetables, the produce of his garden, which kept us supplied for the best part of a week.

By six o'clock the tide had run off sufficiently to enable us to proceed, and boarding *Snipe* we got under way. As we proceeded up the river the tide grew slacker, and with a fair wind we made good progress. Once away from the entrance, and the Ore is an excellent sailing river with plenty of good



honest sailing water between banks that are fairly steep-to. But it is a most extraordinary river for all that, running practically parallel with the shore for a distance of ten miles. All that separates it from the sea is a narrow bank of shingle, at places no more than a hundred yards in width, and as one sails up the river the roar of the sea breaking upon the shore can be heard plainly. Three miles from Shingle Street, Havergate Island divides the river into two channels. There is ample water for a small craft in either, but we took the southern channel as being the more direct route. A mile above Havergate Island is situated Orford, with its pretty village and fine old castle; and as we had been recommended to make a point of dining at the Crown and Castle Hotel, we brought up there in a snug berth for the night and went ashore.

Turning to my old pencil-scribbled log-book I find the following remark: "Dined at the Crown and Castle, where they gave us a dinner fit for the gods; soup, boiled salmon, loin of lamb, asparagus, sweets, and cheese." This strikes one as not altogether bad for a little country hotel to supply at a moment's notice. But in the late Mr. George Hunt's time the Crown and Castle had a reputation for good fare that attracted yachtsmen from all parts of the East Coast. Mr. Hunt was himself a keen yachtsman, who took a leading part in the promotion of the local regattas, and we spent a pleasant evening "talking boats" with him.

Before leaving the next morning we paid another visit ashore to look at the castle, of which a portion

is still in an excellent state of preservation. The castle is very old: so old, we were told, that no reliable record of its origin can be traced. The walls of the great round tower are said to be 20 ft. thick, and one enters by a door on the first floor approached by a flight of external steps. There are four storeys, and on the third is a furnished room which was fitted up by the Marquess of Hertford when he owned the property. I believe the Hunt dinner is still held in this room, and it is a great resort of picnic parties. Climbing to the top of the tower we had a splendid view of the North Sea and the surrounding country. Near by is the Manor of Sudbourne, formerly the residence of the Marquess of Hertford, who is said to have been the original of Thackeray's Marquess of Steyne. On the way back to the quay we inspected the old church, which dates from the eighth century. The chancel is separated from the nave and lies in ruins, and a portion of the tower has fallen. It was certainly a picturesque old building, but we did not tarry long as we were anxious to save our tide up to Aldeburgh.

We should have liked to have paid a visit to Orford Ness Lighthouse, but did not fancy trudging a mile or more each way across the shingle, for the bank that separates the Aldeburgh river from the sea is here at its widest. Moreover, there was no more than a light air from the south-east, and had we delayed our departure any longer we should have lost our tide to Aldeburgh. And so we went on board and got under way. We had not

proceeded very far when *Snipe* ran on to a mud flat. We tried to push her off with the sweep, but the mud was too soft. We could not afford to waste much time if we were to save the flood up the river and so decided to lay out the kedge. This I found a rather ticklish job with our little 7-ft. Berthon dinghy, but by slinging the anchor over the stern of the dinghy, secured by a line, I contrived to drop it safely. With the assistance of the kedge we soon hauled *Snipe* off, but in the meantime the breeze had completely died away. But by taking it in turns to row with the sweep, we managed to save our tide and reached the anchorage just as the boats were swinging.

All the way from Orford to Aldeburgh the river and coast-line converge, and at Slaughdon, where we anchored, the shingle bank is at its narrowest. The river there takes an abrupt turn inland, the channel, navigable on the tide as far as Iken, meandering through wide mud flats. It seems strange that the river should never have burst through the narrow bank of shingle at Slaughdon, but I suppose the shingle is kept in place by some trick of the coast tide.

Slaughdon is a quaint little old-world fishing village adjoining Aldeburgh, and there is a capital anchorage off the quay, where one can land at all states of tide. It is only a short walk into the town of Aldeburgh, a pleasant little seaside resort with a capital golf course for those who follow the "Royal and Ancient" game. The principal feature of interest is the old Moot Hall. This picturesque fifteenth-



century building originally stood in the centre of the town, but owing to the coast erosion is now on the beach. We had no intention of staying at Aldeburgh as our short holiday was rapidly drawing to a close, and we had only two days left in which to get back to Fambridge. Having done a little necessary shopping, we returned to our boat, and after lunch got under way homeward bound.

Whilst we had been ashore a fine easterly breeze had filled in and we had a slashing sail down to the mouth of the river, where we brought up for the night close to the College bathing place. After dinner we went ashore to arrange with the pilot to take us out in the morning and to pay a farewell visit to our Coastguard friend.

Of the passage home my log-book says nothing beyond bald references to winds, time and tides. We were sailing old familiar waters, and as far as I remember the trip was without any special incident. *Snipe*, during this short trial trip, more than came up to my expectations, and as soon as I reached my home waters I commenced to refit her in readiness for a holiday cruise.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EASTER YACHTING

ALTHOUGH a few hardy spirits make a practice of keeping their craft afloat throughout the year, the majority of small yacht-owners berth their boats ashore for the winter and commission them again at Easter. At that season the yachtsman looks for bright spring weather; and the temptation of a few days' cruising, after being so long divorced from his sport, is more than he can resist. The realisation, however, seldom fulfils the promise of the anticipation, for as often as not the weather is quite unsuitable for small-yacht cruising. During the past fifteen years the Easter holidays that have been graced with really good sailing weather might be counted upon the fingers of one hand, but hope springs eternal in the human breast, and as sure as March comes round one fits out one's yacht for an Easter cruise. At no other time of year are the meteorological conditions so uncertain, and the hapless wight who ventures far afield has every prospect of experiencing a severe "dusting" ere he returns to his moorings.

Looking back down a vista of years, the worst Easter that I can recall to mind was that of 1900, and few who spent the holiday afloat are likely to forget it. Accompanied by a friend, I joined my

little 3-ton canoe-yacht *Snipe* at Fambridge on the Thursday evening, having mapped out a cruise to Harwich and Aldeburgh; but "the best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley," and that trip was never taken. It was a cheerless evening, and the glass was tumbling down in the most ominous manner. The wind came in fitful gusts, and a mizzle of rain added to our discomfort as we rowed off from the hard in a folding dinghy heavily laden with luggage and stores. As is usually the case when a yacht has just been launched, there was much to be done, and the shades of night had long fallen ere everything was stowed away and the cabin shipshape. We therefore decided to defer our start until the morrow, and, with an anxious glance at the still falling barometer, turned in early.

I was rudely awakened about midnight by being flung out of my bunk, but did not fall very far, as I alighted on top of my companion, who had already been thrown upon the floor. Struggling up, I found the matches, and lighted the lamp. The boat was rolling abominably, and everything that could possibly break adrift had done so. My friend, still half-asleep, was extricating himself from a pile of blankets, cushions, books, and other items of the ship's inventory which had collected in a heap on top of him. It was blowing a heavy westerly gale, and the glass had fallen three-tenths of an inch since we turned in. The din was indescribable. Sundry saucepans and kettles had fallen from the shelf in the fo'c'stle, and were clanging



about on the floor; the china clattered in the pantry, and the chain cable banging against a bucket added its quota to the general cacophony. Without, the wind howled in the rigging, and the boom, which had got adrift from the crutch, banged about viciously, dragging the mainsheet-block backwards and forwards along the iron horse. Hastily donning my nether garments and a monkey-jacket, I went out into the night. It was a wild scene. Great clouds obscured the full moon, and white horses chased each other across the face of the waters. All around, riding lights danced merrily from the forestays of the yachts at anchor, on several of which ghostly figures moved about securing gear that had broken adrift. Lying athwart the tide, the *Snipe* was rolling her covering board under, and it was with no little difficulty that I got the boom end down on to the main horse and securely lashed. Then, having accomplished my task, I crept shivering into the little cabin. To sleep on the bunks was out of the question, so we put a mattress on the floor, and, wedging ourselves in as best we could, contrived to pass the remainder of the night in fitful dozing.

We awoke in the morning to find the gale blowing with unabated vigour, but the young flood not having yet gathered strength, the river was smoother than it had been over-night. I went on deck to have a look round, and discovered that the dinghy had disappeared. A pull on the painter, which was still made fast to the main horse, apprised me of the fact that the boat had sunk. Hauling her

to the surface, I found that one of her canvas sides had been torn right out, probably by the fluke of the anchor, which was catted on the bow. The dinghy being of no practical use until repaired, I hailed the passing ferry-boat, and had it taken ashore. It was a cold, cheerless morning, and cruising being out of the question on account of the heavy weather, we decided to turn in again and have a few hours' sleep in comfort as compensation for the chequered night we had spent. We had to pay dearly for our laziness, however, for when we woke at about eleven o'clock the motion of the boat was so violent that cooking was almost an impossibility. The river was now bank-full, and a strong flood tide meeting the wind had knocked up a nasty hollow sea. Surely boat never performed such wild antics as did the little *Snipe* that morning. At one moment she lay head on to the sea, pitching bows under, and the next she was riding athwart the tide rolling her decks in. With much difficulty and delay we contrived to struggle into our clothes and stow away the bedding, debating meanwhile the possibility of preparing breakfast. Any ideas of a square meal we may have possessed were speedily abandoned as impracticable, and the most we aspired to was a frugal repast of hard-boiled eggs and coffee. Wedging ourselves between the bunks, we performed the necessary culinary operations on the floor, one holding the Primus stove, and the other the kettle. It was tiring work, and an imminent risk of being scalded urged us to waste no time. The eggs were consequently boiled in

the water destined for the coffee-pot, a somewhat unpleasant method of procedure, but under such conditions one could not afford to be over-fastidious.

Having for the time being stayed the pangs of hunger, we went out into the well to see how matters fared with the other boats. It was about high water, and the banks of the river no longer affording any protection, the yachts felt the full force of the gale. One little craft had just broken adrift from her moorings, and was careering down wind under bare poles. The owners of a cutter moored close by had succumbed to *mal de mer*, and, throwing dignity to the winds, leant over the side in a posture that admitted of no disguise. The sight of their physical distress proved the undoing of my companion, who had had no previous experience of small yachts, and he speedily "laid all before him," as Kipling hath it. Being now without a dinghy, I had no means of taking him ashore, although for that matter I doubt if any small Berthon boat such as mine could have lived in the sea that was running. Then the tide began to ebb, and the additional strain thrown upon the vessels' moorings proved too much for many of them. Looking round, I counted no less than nine yachts dragging their ground tackle at one and the same time. Three of these, moreover, were driving down on to the *Snipe*. The position had now become untenable, and we must clear out at once if we would avert disaster.

Crawling forward with the small jib, I hauled it out along the bowsprit, and bent on sheets and





“He speedily ‘laid all before him,’ as Kipling hath it.”



halyard. Then, slipping the mooring, I set the sail sheeted to windward. The yacht turned upon her heel, and a moment later we were speeding down the river, pursued by the howling gale. We were none too soon, for, had our departure been delayed but by a few minutes, the dragging vessels must have driven foul of us. The ebb was now running hard, and although the *Snipe* showed but the veriest rag of sail to the wild wind, she travelled fast through the water. At Burnham the gale had wrought havoc amongst the yachts, and as we ran through the anchorage we noticed several craft with broken bowsprits, whilst the chafed topsides of others gave evidence of recent collision. Whilst running down the Crouch we had close-reefed and prepared the mainsail for setting, as we should require some after-canvas to work the boat into the berth I had in view. As soon as we were clear of the congested Burnham anchorage, I set the sail, and the sloop, piling up a bow wave that rose almost to the level of the deck, drove down the tideway like a frightened hare. We were now approaching our destination, and presently the mouth of the River Roach opened out on our starboard hand. As we hauled our wind round Branklet Spit, the *Snipe* buried herself to the coamings, but after a few wild lurches she leapt into smooth water. Holding our luff, we shot up to the weather bank of the Roach; the jib fluttered down, and the anchor splashed over the side. We had found the snugget of berths, for under the lee of the steep-to bank the water was as smooth as a



mill-pond. This, indeed, was the only comfortable anchorage obtainable in the district, and a goodly fleet of Burnham and Fambridge boats had already there assembled. By nightfall nearly sixty yachts and barges were brought up in close company sheltering from the heavy weather. Here we could at least cook and sleep in comfort, and for three livelong days we had little else to do.

All Saturday and Sunday the storm raged with undiminished fury, and when we turned out on Monday morning there was no sign of any abatement. But we had to get home, and must at all hazards attempt to win back to Fambridge. Whilst we were having breakfast we saw three yachts get under way with close-reefed canvas, but one after the other, after making a board out into the Crouch, turned tail and ran back. This was not very encouraging, but we determined to make an attempt to get home. Having packed the crockery in the pantry with cotton-waste to obviate the risk of breakage, and lashed up everything likely to get adrift, we set our treble-reefed mainsail and storm jib. Then, getting the anchor, we reached out of the Roach. As we emerged from the shelter of Branklet Spit, we encountered three big hollow seas, which broke on board and, rushing in a cascade over decks and cabin-top, flooded the well. Hardening our hearts, we drove her at it, and the good little ship, responding nobly to the call, forged ahead through the smother of blinding spray. Yard by yard she won her way up the Burnham river, and although we had not a dry

rag between us, we were supremely happy in the exhilaration of the moment. It was grand sport driving along with the lee decks buried beneath the seething sea; and with a good tide under her the *Snipe* made capital progress. As we drew near to Burnham we began to regard our homecoming almost in the light of an accomplished fact, and our only anxiety was lest we should arrive at Fambridge too late for a hot lunch ashore. But fortune frowned upon us, and just as we were going about at the end of a board, the jib sheet carried away. The violent slatting of the sail stopped the *Snipe* from coming round, and, missing stays, she drove ashore. Having no dinghy, all we could do was to drop the anchor and wait for water. Fortunately, the tide was flowing fast, and in an hour's time there was sufficient water round us to warrant an attempt at getting under way again. Close into the mud where we were there was very little tide, and the *Snipe* lay wind-rode, so, setting our canvas, we worked up to the anchor in short boards and successfully sailed it out. We were now fairly under way again, but had not proceeded a hundred yards when one of the jib sheet fairleads drew out of the deck. There was then no alternative but to run back to the Roach to repair damages, so I bore up and put the sloop before the wind.

It was well, perhaps, that our haven of refuge was not very far distant, for, looking over my shoulder, I noticed great clouds of Stygian blackness rolling up astern. I have never seen the sky look so wicked, and it was with a feeling of relief that

we hauled our wind into the Roach. As we rounded Branklet Spit we met the Fambridge cutter *Sunbeam* storming out under a reefed trysail, and hailed her to draw attention to the coming squall, but she held on her way. Luffing up into our old berth, we let go the anchor and hastily stowed the sails. The owners of the *Sunbeam* meantime had evidently thought better of it and put back, but they had left it too late. The squall broke just as they reached the entrance, and the yacht was blown ashore on a mudflat. There she lay with sails slatting in the wind and seas making a clean breach over her, whilst her two owners stood on the sloping deck grasping the mast to maintain a precarious foothold. Then the blinding hail and sleet blotted her out from view, and we sought shelter in the cabin.

Never have I known such a squall. The wind howled and shrieked like a myriad furies, and, sheltered as she was, the *Snipe* trembled from stem to stern. I read subsequently in the papers that the wind attained a velocity of eighty miles an hour, and can quite believe it. It lasted about a quarter of an hour and then the sun came out. As soon as the squall was over a boat manned by a strong crew of 'blue-jackets put off from the Coast-guard vessel, and after two hours' hard work, succeeded in warping the *Sunbeam* into a place of safety.

The gale seemed to have reached its climax in that vicious squall, for the weather began to mend, and although several more rain-squalls of less



severity passed over, the wind took off rapidly. Late in the evening the whole fleet made a start for home under shortened canvas, and we eventually picked up our moorings in a flat calm somewhere about midnight. Thus ended the worst Easter holiday, as regards weather, that I have ever experienced; but there have been others when the actual discomfort was more acute. One trip in particular I am never likely to forget, for we were lost in a dense fog for four days, and, running short of provisions, had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours—but that story has already been told in a previous chapter.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CRUISING IN COMPANY

It was with feelings of relief that I shipped my sculls and grasped the rail of *Snipe*, for two men of average weight and a fair-sized case of stores is a big load for a 7-ft. Berthon dinghy, even in smooth water. The little boat's freeboard had been reduced almost to vanishing point, and I verily believe that had either of us sneezed or coughed we should have capsized. Although the passage perilous had been won we were not by any means out of the wood, as the heavy case had to be got on board and it was something of a problem how to do it. If either of us stepped out before the other the tiny dinghy would probably sink, either by the bow or stern as the case might be.

"Don't play the giddy ox, Max," I said to my companion, who was shaking the boat with his untimely laughter. "We don't want to do the King John stunt and lose our baggage in the Wash. We must get out together and, what is more, must do it by numbers, as they say in the Army. When I say 'One' stand up, and when I say 'Two' step gently on board. Now then: 'One'——'Two'! Good; she's shipped barely a bucketful."

Belaying the painter so that the dinghy lay conveniently alongside, I attached the main halyard to the case and swung it out gently on to the *Snipe's* cabin-top.

"I'll unpack out here and pass the things down to you; that will save making a mess in the cabin."

Murmurs of delight rose through the hatchway as I handed down sundry tins of curried fowl and lobster, steak-and-kidney puddings, jars of potted meat, jam, marmalade, and numerous other articles such as sailing men take with them when they go cruising.

We were bound away for a three weeks' cruise on the East Coast in company with my brother's 4-ton cutter *Walrus* and a converted ship's lifeboat known as *Viper*. Max's elder brother Hans had signed on for the trip in *Walrus*, whilst *Viper* was manned by the syndicate of youngsters who owned her. Hans and Max, it is perhaps superfluous to remark were Germans, but having passed the greater part of their lives in England were German in little more than name. They had at first proposed coming with us in their own boat, but as she was merely a small canoe-yawl built for sailing on the Upper Thames, and quite unsuitable for cruising in open water, we had persuaded them to give up the idea and join us as crew.

These Germans were a strange pair. Ashore they were the best of friends, but afloat lived a regular cat-and-dog life. From the moment they boarded their craft until they went ashore again it was one long wrangle, and as my brother remarked,



if they were coming with us for three whole weeks it was better for all of us that they should be separated.

I still have a lively recollection of the first time I ever saw Hans and Max. Lying in the Roach one Saturday I heard a boat bring up close to me late at night after I had turned in, but when I awoke the next morning I had forgotten her existence. Judge of my surprise, then, when I heard a smothered yell of wrath close alongside, "What have you done with that — tomato?" Looking through one of the scuttles in my cabin-top, I saw the "stern" of a somewhat corpulent man clad in white flannel trousers protruding from under the after-deck of a small canoe-yawl. He was evidently engaged in groping about in the dark after something he had lost and of which he was in urgent need. Seated on the fore-deck was a younger man who was combing his moustache with the aid of a hand mirror. Then, with violent contortions of his well-nourished body, the man down aft began to extricate himself and presently a bearded face, red with rage and hard breathing, appeared above the coaming. "What have you done with that — tomato?" he shouted again, evidently in a towering temper. The answer was unsatisfactory, even flip-pant, and there commenced an unseemly wrangle about the elusive vegetable—or is it a fruit?—which was still raging when I got under way an hour later.

It was the same thing every week-end. No sooner did they get on board than they commenced

to squabble and the quarrel went on intermittently until Monday morning when they returned to town. Yet when ashore they were the best of friends and lived together in perfect peace. At times their squabbles on the boat were particularly violent, and I remember an occasion on which the younger hurled a 3-lb. pot of jam at his brother's head. The latter, by ducking, fortunately escaped this somewhat unusual missile and the glass jar was shattered on the floor-boards. The wrangle that ensued about who should clean up the mess lasted all day and far into the night.

Yes; my brother was right. If they were coming with us for three weeks it was certainly desirable that they should be kept apart as much as possible.

We had decided to go to Lowestoft, and as none of us had been farther north than the Aldeburgh river we regarded the cruise in the light of an adventure. For some weeks past we had been studying charts and tide-tables, and now at last the long-looked-for day of departure had arrived. We only waited for daylight to set out in quest of adventure, and it seemed absurd to go to bed just for three or four hours. We therefore killed time by visiting various yachts moored near by, and I have no doubt made ourselves nuisances generally.

Half-past two in the morning may seem a strange hour for breakfast, but when afloat one's internal economy declines to be ruled by the clock. Moreover as one's meals when yachting are apt to be movable feasts it is prudent to start with a full stomach. Just as we were finishing our meal, I

heard the creaking of blocks and looking out saw *Viper's* mainsail going up. Leaving Max to clear away the breakfast things, I set about getting *Snipe* under way, and presently the three boats were dropping down the river in close company before the lightest of westerly airs.

It was a perfect June morning, a light haze giving promise of a hot day. As the sun rose above the horizon and gathered strength, the mist cleared off, but owing to the paltry nature of the breeze our progress was slow. We were near the mouth of the river when the ebb finished running and it was all we could do to stem the young flood. We struggled on, however, and made the Fishery Beacon ere the complete failure of the wind compelled us to anchor.

Brought up about half a mile away was a barge yacht of some twelve tons, and as at that time such vessels were something of a novelty we decided to row over and look at her. Leaving *Snipe* at anchor with her mainsail "scandalised," we got into our cockle-shell of a dinghy and pushed off. The sea was as smooth as a mill-pond and we soon drew near to the yacht, and then, discovering that her owner was a man I knew, we went on board. Our visit was well timed, for a most appetising smell of frizzling bacon greeted us, and a few minutes later we were sitting down to an excellent breakfast in a cabin that seemed positively palatial after that of the *Snipe*.

It was the first time that I had been on board of a barge yacht of any size, and the internal accom-



modation astonished me. In addition to the large saloon there were three sleeping cabins and a roomy fo'c'stle. The saloon was more like a room in a house than a yacht's cabin. In place of the usual sofa bunks there were ordinary chairs, which could be secured to the sides of the vessel when the latter was under way. The barge was certainly very comfortable, but I was, and for that matter still am, rather sceptical as to the sea-going qualities of a flat-bottomed craft in heavy weather. We passed a couple of hours very pleasantly on board this barge yacht and then a gentle breeze filled in from the south-east. Seeing that *Snipe* was beginning to sail about under her scandalised mainsail and fret at her anchor we deemed it prudent to hasten on board. *Walrus* and *Viper* were already under way and in a few minutes we were after them. Setting the spinnaker on the bowsprit-end we wooed the gentle breeze with such good effect that in half an hour we were at the head of the fleet. We carried the breeze almost to Clacton, but then it failed us again. This I fully expected, as it seems to be my fate to be becalmed off Clacton. Many and many a weary hour have I spent lolloping about at anchor off that haunt of the tripper, and the occasions upon which I have carried a good breeze right through the Wallet could be almost counted upon the fingers of one hand.

As usual I had to anchor off the end of the pier and for more than three hours *Snipe* rolled about under a sweltering sun. The turn of the tide and

a smart breeze came simultaneously, and getting the anchor we made short miles to the Naze in close company with *Walrus* and *Viper*. The last mentioned then held on up the coast, her crew having decided to go on to Lowestoft; but *Walrus* and ourselves put into Felixstowe Dock, as we wanted to spend a day on the Orwell before going farther north. As we had not been to bed the previous night we turned in early and Max and myself slept soundly for rather more than twelve hours.

After a leisurely breakfast we got under way and proceeded up the Orwell in company with *Walrus*. It was another perfect summer's day, and the river, bathed in sunshine, was seen at its best. There is perhaps nothing particularly striking about the lower reaches, and the superb scene that meets one's gaze on rounding Collimer Point comes as a surprise. From this point all the way to Ipswich the scenery is magnificent, and one finds it difficult to realise that one is in East Anglia and not in the West of England. The sailing, it must be admitted, is not of the best as there are too many trees in the neighbourhood. Both banks are densely wooded to the water's edge and the breeze in consequence is apt to be rather fickle. There are, moreover, plenty of mudflats to trap the casual navigator who imprudently ventures within the lines of buoys that mark the channel. But provided that one is not pressed for time, nothing could be more delightful than sailing on the upper reaches of this delectable river. After passing the

picturesque towers of Freston the channel becomes rather narrow, but is well buoyed right up to Ipswich. The yacht anchorage is below the docks and it is the custom of the port to moor fore and aft.

After spending a couple of hours ashore we returned on board and dropped down the river to Felixstowe; but as it was our intention to sail at midnight for Lowestoft we did not think it worth while to enter the dock. We brought up to the southward of the dock pier, a quite comfortable berth in fine weather, and after dining on *Walrus* returned to the *Snipe* to snatch a few hours' sleep before starting on our journey.



## CHAPTER XX

### LOWESTOFT

AWAKENED at 11 p.m. by the alarm clock, we turned out to find a clear starlit night with a light breeze from S.S.E. There is an element of risk about sailing at night in a small yacht, as the lights one carries, even if of regulation size, are so close to the water that they are not readily seen from the deck of a large ship; but in those days to be under way in the dark was a novel experience, and it was with feelings of pleasurable excitement that I got out and trimmed the sidelights.

*Snipe*, as she lay at anchor, pitched gently to the swell that rolled in from the sea, whilst the riding lights of craft in the Stour blinked cheerfully across the waters of the harbour. Altogether it was a jolly night for making a passage; and leaving Max to brew a big jug of coffee, I began to make preparations for getting under way.

"Coffee's ready," shouted Max from the cabin, and in obedience to his summons I knocked off work and went below. Our meal of cakes and coffee was soon over and then we tidied up the cabin, stowing things so that they would not be likely to get adrift when we were at sea; and then

set about getting the dinghy on board. The little Berthon, when folded, stowed nicely on the star-board bunk and was lashed securely to the cot frame. We were thus freed from the incubus of a dinghy towing astern, which always reduces the speed of a small yacht and in heavy weather may even be a menace to her safety. Finally, we pinned the chart down to the cabin table, and turning down the gimballed lamp left the cabin.

*Walrus* was already getting under way and so we lost no time in setting the mainsail. Then, while Max stowed away the riding light, I lit and shipped the sidelights. These little sidelights, being fitted with paraffin burners, gave no trouble, but the binnacle lamp defied all our efforts to keep it alight. After wasting the best part of half-an-hour over it, I removed the lamp altogether and substituted a short candle, which served the purpose admirably. *Walrus*, in the meantime, had started and was out of sight by the time we had got our anchor.

A couple of boards took us clear of the harbour, and when round Landguard Point we had a fair wind although it was very light. It was certainly very pleasant sitting in the well smoking our pipes, but we found it difficult to keep awake. Several times I caught myself nodding at the helm, and presently Max was snoring. Off Bawdsey Haven the wind deserted us altogether, but we continued to drift up the coast on the ebb tide. Soon there was a faint glimmer of dawn in the eastern sky and

it gradually grew lighter. I then made a discovery that caused me much amusement. The candle in the binnacle, which I had renewed several times, burnt bravely, but it never occurred to me that the grease might make a mess in the boat. Nor did it, as a matter of fact, for it had been dripping steadily on Max's feet, which he had stretched out in front of him. Always particular as to his appearance, he was wearing brown boots that he had spent much time in polishing, and there, nicely balanced on top of one of them, was a pyramid of solidified candle grease. I could not refrain from waking him up to look at it, but I regret to say that he failed to grasp the humour of the situation.

The crux of the trip up to Lowestoft is Orford Ness. If one fails to save the ebb round that formidable point it is probable that a small yacht will get no further until the next ebb commences, for the tide runs like a mill-race round the Ness. Although we had, as we thought, allowed ourselves ample time, we had been so much delayed by lack of wind that it was now very doubtful if we should succeed in saving our tide. We therefore got out the sweep and took it in turns to row. *Walrus* was also busy with the "wooden topsail," and although all laboured incessantly, we just failed in our purpose.

As we were debating whether we should anchor and wait for the next tide or turn back, a nice little breeze from the southward came to encourage us. Watching carefully some marks ashore we found



that we were holding our own against the flood, and no more; but we knew that if we could only win round the Ness we should find comparatively slack water in the bay. So we hardened our hearts and prepared for a struggle.

It is bold water round Orford Ness, and both yachts crept inshore to cheat the flood as much as possible. A few yards from the shingle beach the water is fathoms deep, and we went in so close that the crew of *Walrus* actually attempted to pole her along the beach with a boat-hook. But the shingle was so loose that the boat-hook merely sank in without imparting motion to the boat. By hard rowing, however, we contrived to make slow progress; and at length, after an hour's desperate work, managed to squirm round the Ness.

No sooner were we round the point and in slack water than a fine sailing breeze filled in, and we began to reel off the miles at a merry gait. The fresh breeze soon knocked up a rough sea, but it was grand sailing nevertheless. The little *Snipe* fairly revelled in the conditions and passing *Walrus* went right away from her. Off Southwold the breeze freshened still more, and *Snipe*, with her lee decks buried, sloshed through the rough water in grand style, covering the eleven miles to Lowestoft in just over an hour and a half, a creditable performance for an 18-ft. boat.

As I had never been to Lowestoft before I was anxious to be ready for any emergency that might arise, and off the harbour hove the yacht to. We

then got the anchor over the bow and overhauled the cable ready for running. I also coiled down warps on the fore and after decks, cleared the sweep ready for use, hung fend-offs over the side, and finally launched the dinghy. Whilst thus engaged *Walrus* came up, and so we entered the harbour practically together. I took the precaution to gybe before negotiating the entrance, but my brother, neglecting to do so, experienced a somewhat lively five minutes.

As luck would have it a crowd of smacks were coming out as we entered, and there was a regular jamb up between the pier-heads. An eddy of wind caught *Walrus's* mainsail aback, causing her to gybe all standing. "Ware gybe," shouted my brother as the boom swung over, but the warning came too late and we heard a loud splash. Looking back I saw Hans struggling in the water. A cry of alarm rose from the crowd, which, however, soon gave place to a ripple of laughter when Hans was seen to grasp the stern of the dinghy. It was certainly rather amusing to see the unfortunate Hans, with water running off his beard and his face distorted with rage, towing in the wake of *Walrus* and calling my brother all the names he could think of both in English and German. But my brother was far too busy to attend to him, and Hans had to hang on as best he could until *Walrus* was in the yacht basin.

We were lucky enough to find vacant berths alongside *Viper*, whose crew put off in their dinghy

and helped us to moor. Then we retired to the cabin to pour out a libation to the gods, which on this occasion took the form of bottled ale, and then learnt that *Viper* had also distinguished herself when entering the harbour.

Her crew, like ourselves, had never visited the port before, but with the confidence of youth had come roaring into the yacht basin with every stitch of canvas set, including a topsail, with a fresh wind on the beam. When they entered the basin they discovered to their dismay that they had sailed into a regular *cul-de-sac*, and there was insufficient room to bring the yacht to the wind. Ahead of them was the dock wall, which appeared so close that they instinctively put the helm hard down and charged into the tier of yachts. They were fortunate to escape serious damage, but struck a steam yacht a sidelong blow, leaving a long streak of black paint upon the latter's white topside. As *Viper* had to lie alongside her victim all the time she was at Lowestoft, it will be readily imagined that her relations with her neighbour were not of a very cordial nature.

Our first impressions of Lowestoft Harbour were altogether delightful. It was certainly very jolly lying in the yacht basin with a fine band playing on the pier above, but the keen interest taken by the crowd in our cooking and other domestic operations was positively embarrassing, and before long we were compelled to rig our well-tent to obtain a little privacy. I think Max was the magnet



that drew the girls on the pier. Always particular as to his appearance, his toilet now that we were in port became quite a work of art. Having completed in the cabin the foundations of the sartorial edifice that was to delight the hearts of the maidens of Lowestoft, he would appear in the well and proceed to spread out on the deck an array of toilet requisites more suitable for a musical comedy artiste than a yachtsman. For a full hour each morning he wore on his face a moustache trainer, what time he sprayed his hair, brushed his teeth, polished his boots, etc. He was horribly in my way when I wanted to cook breakfast, and as a rule half the morning was cut to waste by his tomfoolery. However, I had my revenge a few days later, when we were lying on Oulton Broad.

On that particular morning we had arranged with *Walrus* and *Viper* to have a sail on the Broads, and as I saw the others getting under way whilst Max was still engaged upon his everlasting toilet, I left him to it and commenced to get *Snipe* under way. Being in a hurry, and not in the best of tempers, I let the chain run down the hawse-pipe without taking any steps to clean it first. Now, the bottom of Oulton Broad is composed of black mud of the most tenacious and objectionable description, and a considerable quantity of it was transferred to the interior of the boat with the chain. Whilst thus occupied I heard cries of anger and dismay coming from the cabin, and on going below found that Max had left his big portmanteau lying open on the

fo'c'stle floor, and the chain, covered with slimy black mud of the consistency of condensed milk, had settled in a heap upon certain highly prized shirts of subtle hue. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ!* For the remainder of the day Max's temper bordered upon the peevish.

It was during our stay at Lowestoft that we acquired the homing lobster. When we first made his acquaintance he was sunning himself on a marble slab in the window of a fishmonger's shop, and as we wanted something for lunch I asked the price. He was a fine big chap and seemed a bargain at eighteenpence, but in the light of after experience I am inclined to think that the fishmonger had a very good reason for disposing of him so cheaply.

Now, it happened that when we returned on board we were hailed by the crew of *Viper*, who asked us to lunch with them, an invitation we promptly accepted. Max, who was carrying the lobster, stuffed it away in a locker, where it was destined to remain for some time, for, going for a steamboat trip the next day, we forgot all about it. Our crustacean friend, however, seemed to resent our neglect and did not fail to apprise us of the fact. At first it was a subtle suggestion rather than a smell, and although our breakfast was punctuated by occasional whiffs not altogether pleasant, they were not sufficiently marked in character to indicate their source. I accused Max of having spilt some of his hair-wash, but he repudiated the

suggestion with such heat that I deemed it advisable to drop the subject.

As I had some Press work to do and Max wanted to write some letters we decided to spend the morning on board, and as the sun rose higher in the heavens the heat in the little cabin became almost tropical. Before the morning had advanced very far that which had been but a subtle suggestion had attained the dignity of a smell that fairly shouted at us, and it was obvious that the cause must be investigated without further delay. We therefore commenced a systematic search, and in course of time I happened to open the door of the sail locker. Our hunt was over. Max said that he saw a blue haze come from the locker when I opened the door, but that, I think, was a stretch of the imagination. Anyhow, I thought it prudent to hold my nose with one hand whilst consigning the offending lobster to the deep with the other. Thinking that it would sink, I merely dropped it over the side, but to my annoyance the lobster floated; so I fished it out again and threw it some distance away. In half-an-hour it was back alongside again. Once more I fished the beastly thing out and threw it as far as I could and well clear of the tier of yachts. We went ashore in the afternoon and did not return on board until dinner-time, when, to our disgust, we found that loathsome lobster waiting for us alongside *Snipe*. To be thus persecuted by an eighteenpenny lobster in a delicate state of health was intolerable, so taking it into the dinghy



I rowed out of the yacht basin and dumped it overboard in the outer harbour.

One grows accustomed to certain familiar noises in a yacht, such as the ripple of the tide against her bow, the creaking of spars, or the grinding of the cable on the bottom; but any strange sound, however slight, immediately attracts one's attention. And it must be remembered that the hull of a vessel acts as a sounding-board and noises are enormously magnified. It is perhaps therefore not altogether surprising that I should have been awakened the following morning by a gentle tapping against the yacht's side. For a time I lay in my bunk wondering what the strange noise might be. The boat was rolling to a slight ground swell coming in from the sea, and every few seconds I heard a faint tap against her planking close to my ear. At last I turned out to investigate, and there, bobbing about in a manner that was positively frolicsome, was our old friend the lobster.

I suppose there must have been some curious set of the tide, but it was quite uncanny the way in which it kept coming back to us with the unerring instinct of a homing pigeon. As we were starting for home after breakfast we allowed our persecutor to remain there, for, as Max remarked, it was the last time he would have the pleasure of our company unless prepared to swim all the way to Brightlingsea, our next port of call.

We had been at Lowestoft for more than a week,

and felt that it was time to be getting back to our home waters. Although Lowestoft is a very pleasant place at which to spend a holiday, the yachtsman who puts in there as a rule stays in port until he leaves for good, as there is not much inducement to put to sea just for a short sail. Moored fore and aft in a tier, one has to deal with the warps of other vessels in addition to one's own; and should the neighbouring craft have been left unattended, as is often the case, one has to thrust each warp in turn below the yacht's keel in order to get out of the tier. Still, if one wants to loaf for a few days Lowestoft is just the place, as there is always plenty to do and see there. The never-ending procession of smacks coming in and going out is always interesting to the sailing man, and for a change the Broads are close at hand. Nevertheless, we were getting a little tired of being penned up in port, and were, perhaps, not altogether sorry that the time had come to leave.

It was eight o'clock ere we had washed up the breakfast things and stowed the dinghy in the cabin, and a full half-hour was cut to waste in getting out of the harbour. There was not sufficient wind to swear by, as the saying goes, and a slight haze over the sea gave promise of another hot day. But travelling south is a much easier proposition on this coast than going north, as one carries the flood tide with one. It is possible for a smart boat to carry ten hours' flood and make

Burnham on the tide, and although that would of course be an exceptional passage one can usually count on at least eight hours' fair tide on this particular trip. The tide was just on the turn when we cleared the harbour, and although we had to row *Snipe* most of the way to Southwold ere a light easterly breeze filled in, we carried the flood for rather more than eight hours and were well round Orford Ness by high water. The wind, however, subsequently fell very light, and our progress against the first of the ebb was rather slow. More than once a complete failure of the breeze compelled us to anchor, and it was not until two o'clock the following morning that we felt our way into Brightlingsea in the dark.

With smacks and other craft brought up haphazard all over the place, Brightlingsea Creek is at the best an uncomfortable anchorage, and we should have done better had we sought a berth in the Pyefleet on the other side of the Colne. But we had run out of bread, and with a view to visiting the baker before breakfast we had decided to go into the Creek. We brought up in what seemed a clear berth, near some smacks, so far as we could judge in the uncertain light, and having been eighteen hours at sea did not waste much time turning in.

I was aroused next morning—or rather the same morning—by a peculiar sensation of motion. As I lay in my bunk half awake, I could hear men's



voices, and the sound of heavy boots tramping on the deck of some craft near by. And all the time there was a gentle lapping of water against *Snipe's* bow as if she were under way. In a few moments I was wide awake, and throwing off my blankets went out into the well. To my astonishment we were out in the Colne and apparently in tow of a smack.

"Where are you taking us?" I shouted.

A man who was coiling down halyards on the fore-deck of the smack looked up and then ran to the side to look over the bow.

"Lord lummy, Bill," he exclaimed to his mate, "if we ain't got the little bwot's anchor."

And sure enough they had. When they had hove up their anchor to the stem-head with the windlass they had evidently brought up ours with it, and all unconscious were towing us out to sea. It was the work of a moment to clear our anchor and drop it, and there we were, brought up in the middle of the Colne the best part of a mile from the hard. To make matters worse what wind there was and also the tide were foul. We tossed up to decide who should row ashore for the bread, and fortune smiling upon me—for once in a way—I went back to bed, whilst Max started on his long row in quest of the bread that was required for breakfast.

The last few days were spent in cruising about the Blackwater, old familiar waters of which I never grow weary, and it was with feelings of

regret that we picked up our moorings at Fambridge and stowed the sails for the last time. Throughout the cruise the weather had been well-nigh perfect, and *Snipe* fully answered my expectations as a cruiser.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A NIGHT AT SEA

THE clock struck ten as I warped the *Seabird* from her berth in Felixstowe Dock one night in June, bound on a single-handed trip to Lowestoft. Within the confines of the basin the yacht lay motionless on the face of the Stygian waters, but an expedition to the end of the pier, made a few minutes before, had convinced me that I should find all the wind I wanted when once at sea. Although there was no moon to light me on my way, the heavens were hung with stars, and everything pointed to fair weather and a smart passage.

The handling of a seven-ton cutter does not, under ordinary circumstances, unduly tax the strength of a man of average physique, but there are times when it is apt to prove uncommonly hard work, a fact that I was destined to discover by bitter experience. The entrance to the dock lies between a pier, on the one hand, and a mudflat, on the other, the tide setting athwart the fairway. Noticing that vessels anchored in Harwich Harbour were still swung up on the flood, I hugged the pier in order to prevent the cutter being swept on to the flat. To my dismay, I discovered that the tide, although flooding out in the harbour, was ebbing



hard in shore, and in a few minutes the *Seabird* lay pinned against the pier. The next half-hour was perhaps the most strenuous I have ever spent. By pushing with all my weight and strength, I could just manage to shove the boat clear of one pile on to the next. And thus I proceeded down the whole length of the pier, bumping from pile to pile to the detriment of the vessel's paint. But it was wicked work. My hands were cut and bleeding from contact with barnacles innumerable, and my nails ditched with slimy weed; but at last I shoved the cutter clear, and, slithering round the pierhead, she was free. Fortunately, the damage sustained was not of much moment. The paint on the port side rather badly scratched, the head of the boat-hook lost in a rotten pile, and a little sacrifice of self-respect on the part of the owner, was the sum total, and the experience gained was not, perhaps, dear at the price.

The wind came strong and true out of the south-east, and I had to make a tack or two ere I could fetch out of Harwich Harbour. Heeled to her covering board, the *Seabird* sped through the troubled waters of the Rolling Ground, throwing spray aft from her weather bow with a freedom that called for the use of oilskins and sou'-wester, but it was certainly most exhilarating. The stars shone brightly overhead, and lighthouses ashore cast their rays across the face of the waters. Aided by a snoring ebb, the cutter leapt the seas like a thing of life, leaving in her wake a trail of sizzling

foam. When clear of Landguard Point I lay a course N.E. for Orford Ness, for at that state of the tide there was plenty of water everywhere. With sheets checked and the wind on the beam, the cutter was soon tramping along at top speed, and as steady on her helm as a church. Then I lashed the tiller, and, having taken a good look round, left her to sail herself whilst I went below for supper. The *Seabird* had a remarkable faculty for steering herself, and, when reaching in a steady breeze, could be left unattended for quite long periods, a trait that often stood me in good stead when cruising single-handed. It would perhaps appear to be a rather dangerous proceeding to lash the tiller and go below, but the risk was more apparent than real. The side-lights were burning brightly, and, being on the starboard tack, the cutter held the right of way. Had she departed to any great extent from her course, the tell-tale compass suspended from the cabin roof would have apprised me of the fact, and, with the weather set fair, the possibility of a bad squall was remote.

It is only when at sea at night that one fully appreciates the comfort of the cabin of even a small yacht. Although but 9 ft. long by 7 ft. 6 in. wide, the saloon of the *Seabird* looked wonderfully snug and homely as I entered, lit up as it was by the red-shaded hanging lamp. The cushioned bunks were wide and comfortable, and the floor was covered with a soft fur rug. The bulkheads and coamings were decorated with pictures and

photographs, whilst curtains of wine-coloured silk imparted an air of luxury. Having lit a pipe and bound up a cut finger, I gave ear to the calls of hunger, and retired to the galley in the fo'c'stle. Presently there arose an appetising smell of cooking, and a quarter of an hour later I sat in a corner of the cabin busily engaged with a basin of soup. By the time I had cleared away the *débris* of my supper it was after midnight and I went out into the well to look round.

The breeze still held steady and true, and, as far as I could make out, the *Seabird* was close to Orford Haven. She was sailing her course with a fidelity almost human, and speeding along as steadily as a train. I freshened the nip of the dinghy painter, and then crept forward to examine the side-lights. Both were burning brightly, the rays of the port light casting a ruddy streak across the black water to leeward with an effect that verged upon the sanguinary. It was a glorious night for making a passage, but the air rather chilly, and, as there was nothing requiring attention, I once more sought the genial warmth of the cabin. Popping my head out every now and then to see that all was well, and occasionally glancing at the tell-tale compass, I remained below for an hour or more, passing the time pleasantly enough with a pipe and a magazine. Sprawling on the lee bunk, it was indescribably jolly. The cutter certainly rolled a good deal, but the steady motion caused no inconvenience, and the muffled roar of the bow wave supplied the bass



to the song of the wind in the rigging. The conditions were not, however, conducive to wakefulness, and presently I fell into a doze.

I was awakened by the sound of slatting sails and the dinghy bumping alongside. Hurrying out into the well, I found the *Seabird* lying head to wind with her headsails aback and the boom swinging wildly from side to side. The dinghy lay under the yacht's quarter, bumping heavily, but had apparently escaped injury. Having let the headsails draw, I made a short board on the port tack to get way on the boat, and then put her on to her course again. I now had time to look about me and take stock of my surroundings. Close at hand, on the port bow, was Orford Ness Lighthouse, sending forth its bright rays as a warning to ships that pass in the night, and far away to starboard was the Shipwash Lightship. To the eastward the blackness of the night seemed to be already yielding to the coming dawn, for the sky on the horizon had assumed a hue of dark, steely blue. It is bold water round the Ness, and one may sail a small yacht within a few feet of the beach, but the tide runs round the point like a mill-race, and this is the crux of the trip from Harwich to Lowestoft. Should a small craft fail to carry the ebb round the Ness, she will need a fresh fair breeze to stem the flood, and many a time I have sailed thus far, only to return to my previous anchorage in the Stour. But on this occasion the *Seabird* had saved her tide with an hour or more to spare, and the lighthouse

was soon left astern. Altering the course to follow the trend of the coastline, wind and sea were brought on the quarter, and I could no longer leave the cutter to sail herself with safety. But before settling down at the tiller, I stowed the working foresail and hoisted a big balloon sail that pulled her through the water at a fine gait.

Those whose lives are passed 'midst the bricks and mortar of a great city know not the glories of a summer sunrise, which, when seen at sea, almost beggars description. And I saw it that morning in Sole Bay at its best. The steely tinge of the eastern sky slowly ascended, until the heavens were filled with a soft but sombre tint of blue. Gradually the stars gave way before the coming dawn, and small, irregular patches of cloud could be dimly discovered in the half light. Presently these clouds were painted with soft opalescent colours, whilst the horizon was bedecked with a rosy red that quickly changed to the colour of fire. Then the great sun rolled up out of the gorgeous east, and another day was born. The *Seabird* sailed upon a sea of shimmering gold, in which I felt an irresistible impulse to bathe. So, bringing the cutter to the wind, I hove her to, and then, grasping the end of the mainsheet, dived into the limpid depths. But the temperature of the water belied its appearance, and I was glad to scramble out and restore the circulation with a brisk towelling.

My early morning bathe, however, served to

sharpen an already keen appetite, and although 4 a.m. may seem a somewhat unconventional hour for the meal, I decided to have breakfast. With wind and sea on the quarter, I could not leave the helm for more than a few minutes at a time, but, by dividing my attention betwixt the tiller and the galley, I contrived to prepare a good meal, comprising bacon, eggs, and coffee. These I spread out on the well seat, and took my early breakfast *al fresco*.

The yacht was then passing Dunwich, and as I hugged the shore to cheat the flood which had commenced to make, I had a good view of all that remains of that once great Suffolk city. Dunwich, in its days of prosperity, we are told, boasted of fifty-two churches, a king's court, a bishop's palace, and an important harbour, but these now lie buried deep beneath the waters of the North Sea. All that remains of the former capital of East Anglia is a ruined church and a few picturesque fishermen's cottages which nestle 'neath the cliff. The church, the last of the fifty-two, stands on the very brink of the precipice, and any day may topple over into the maw of the voracious sea. A portion of the burial-ground has already fallen, and at low water you shall see the bones of bygone generations of Dunwichites bleaching on the strand.

Steadily the cutter ploughed her way through the seas, carrying me every moment nearer to my destination. On past Southwold, with its high lighthouse and recently constructed harbour, and



then she entered the narrow Covehithe Channel, the last stage of the journey.

I passed Kessingland quite close, for the shore is there steep-to, and the pretty little village looked very bright and picturesque in the light of the morning sun. Pakefield, with its crumbling cliffs, was soon left astern, and Lowestoft lay near at hand.

Lowestoft is an awkward port to enter when single-handed, as, owing to the tide setting strongly across the entrance, it is usually necessary to carry one's canvas until within the pier-heads. Inside there is little room to manœuvre, as the outer harbour is, as a rule, crowded with trawlers. It was particularly awkward on this occasion, as I had to gybe as I entered, and then lower away the sails to check the boat's way. As luck would have it, I met a cluster of smacks just inside, and could not leave the tiller till clear of them. I dashed forward and stowed the mainsail as best I could, then the foresail fluttered down, and finally the jib.

But I was already in the yacht basin, and with a good deal more way on than I cared about. I ran forward to let go the anchor, but a link of the chain jambed in the hawse-pipe. In a few seconds I should crash into the dock-wall and lose my bowsprit. But fortune smiled upon me, and a man suddenly appeared on the scene in a dinghy. Thinking, in this instance, discretion better than valour, I hove him a line, with instructions to make fast to a dolphin near by. Luckily, the man

was smart, and I was enabled to pull up the *Seabird* in the nick of time, her bowsprit-end being within a foot of the dock-wall. To warp her into the tier, and moor "all fours," was then a simple matter, and in half-an-hour I was sitting down to a second breakfast, which I considered well earned after spending a night at sea.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BREAKERS AHEAD

“TURN out, Billy, it’s past eight, and we’ve got to get back to Fambridge, you know.”

“Turn out be blowed!” was the curt but forcible answer of my companion as he snuggled lower into his blankets to evade the drops of dripping moisture that had condensed upon the deck beams.

The prospect certainly was not alluring. The windows in the bulkhead were frosted over, and, although covered by five or six blankets, I felt chilled to the bone. The fire having been raked out over night, the temperature of the cabin had fallen so low that one’s breath was plainly visible as it rose in little clouds to the roof. But if it were chilly within it must be worse without, and, loth to leave my comparatively warm bunk, I lay awhile ruminating.

It was Christmas-time, and we had come away for a couple of days’ cruising in my seven-ton cutter *Seabird*. Wild-fowling had been our ostensible objective, but that was merely a blind to satisfy the curiosity of our friends, who would have regarded a yachting trip at such a season as little short of lunacy. We certainly had guns on board,



but given good sailing weather the birds might for us rest easy. Christmas Day had been delightfully fine and mild, but the breeze so fickle that the shades of night had fallen ere we anchored off the picturesque little village of West Mersea. During the evening, which had been spent in preparing and eating a Christmas dinner of gargantuan proportions, the wind suddenly chopped round to the eastward, and the weather had turned bitterly cold. Our feasting had been prolonged to a late hour, and succumbing to the lethargy which followed, we had, as I now remembered with dismay, deferred washing-up operations to the morrow.

*Seabird* was a sharp-sterned converted ship's boat, 28 ft. long by 8 ft. beam, and, unlike most craft of that type, sailed really well to windward. This was due to the addition of a fin-keel of iron which increased her natural draught to about 5 ft. With her bold freeboard and sails of ruddy brown she was not particularly "yachty" in appearance, but she could take care of herself in a breeze, a quality which had often stood me in good stead. A large deep well rendered her particularly suitable for winter work, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more snug and homely than the little cabin when the fire burnt brightly in the "bogey" stove.

Mersea Quarters, when the wind blows from the east, is a somewhat exposed anchorage for small craft, and the *Seabird* riding athwart the tide was rolling abominably. The breeze sighed in the rig-

ging and the halyards played a devil's tattoo on the mast. To this was added the incessant din caused by a saucepan adrift in the fo'c'stle, which threatened to become intolerable. This last at length drove me from my bed, and having restored the dancing utensil to its allotted place in the rack, I decided to get up. My toilet occupied but little time, for being old hands at the game we had turned in "all standing" save for our boots, and in a few minutes I had dressed and stowed away my blankets. Billy had gone to sleep again, and knowing from past experience that nothing short of a fire and breakfast would lure him from his bunk, I turned my attention to the domestic department. Cutting up a block of peat with the bread knife, I filled the stove, and with the aid of some paraffin soon had a fire. Then, having put the kettle on to boil, I went into the well.

It was truly an arctic scene that met my gaze, for the rigging and spars were covered with a thick coating of hoar-frost. The decks were one sheet of ice, whilst long icicles hung at frequent intervals from the boom. The *Seabird* looked for all the world like a sugar ship upon a Christmas-tree. There was a fresh easterly breeze and wildfowl innumerable hovered over the adjacent creeks and islets, filling the air with plaintive call. On the well floor was a pile of dirty plates and dishes, relics of last night's dinner. There are few more depressing sights than the *débris* of a feast, and with a feeling of disgust I hove overboard the carcase of what

had once been a prime Surrey fowl. On returning to the cabin I found my companion in the throes of dressing, or, in other words, hauling on his sea-boots.

Turning to with a will we soon had matters shipshape, and in half-an-hour were sitting down to breakfast. With nicely browned sausages, hot coffee, and the fire burning brightly in the "bogey," matters assumed a more cheerful aspect, but the comfort of the cabin only enhanced by contrast the miserable conditions without, and we looked forward to our thirty-mile passage to Fambridge with unenviable feelings.

"Do you think it's good enough, skipper?" inquired Billy after a long pause as we sat smoking a post-prandial pipe.

"Candidly, matey, I don't think it is," I replied, "but we are going nevertheless. This outlandish place is ten miles from a railway station, and if I left the boat here goodness only knows when I should get her home again. We've got to go, so as soon as you are ready we will get under way."

An easterly breeze knocks up a nasty hollow sea in these waters, and in anticipation of a "dusting" we carefully secured everything in the cabin that might get adrift, and having, much to our regret, put out the fire, we prepared ourselves for the deck. With oilskins over our monkey jackets, we hoped to keep fairly warm, and, hardening our hearts, went out into the bitter cold.

"There seems a good deal of weight in the wind,



Billy; what do you think about reefing?" I hazarded, after a look round.

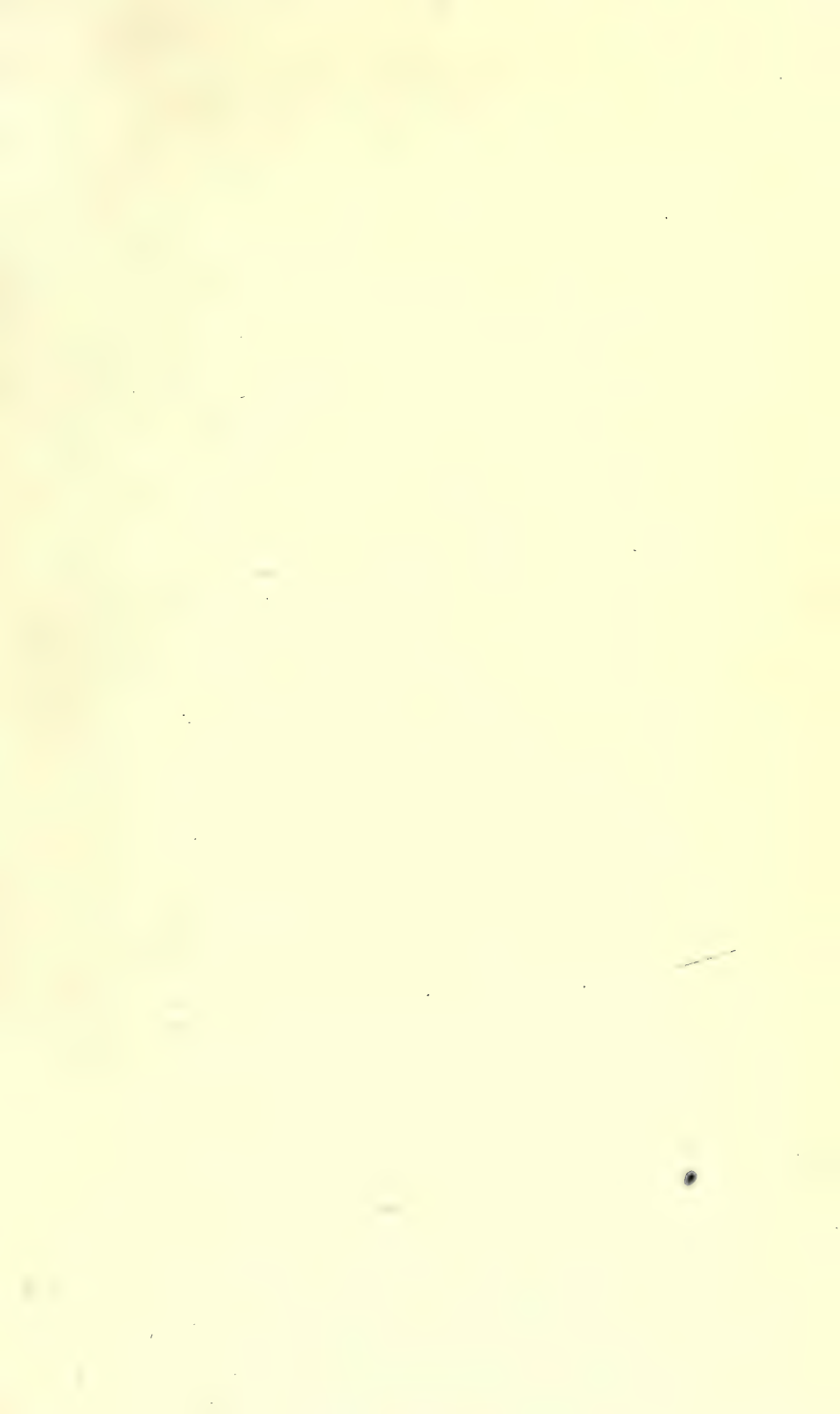
"Oh! let's drive her. This is going to be no picnic, and the sooner we're through with it the better."

"Right you are," I assented; "we'll make the old girl put her best foot foremost."

With the wind blowing against the tide it was necessary to get the anchor ere we could make sail, so having prepared the canvas for setting, we went forward to "fist" the chain. The warmth of the cabin had thawed the ice on the waterways, but that on the fore-deck still remained. What with the rolling of the boat and the slippery deck it was all we could do to maintain a precarious foothold, and when we put our weight upon the chain our feet slipped from under us, and we both sat down suddenly upon the deck. This happened more than once, and it seemed as if the *Seabird* were fated to remain where she was, when I remembered the ashes in the grate. The contents of the ashpan freely sprinkled on the deck solved the problem, for having now a sure foothold we soon broke out the anchor. But handling the mud-becoated chain was wicked work on such a morning, and long ere the anchor was sighted our hands had lost all sense of feeling. Setting the mainsail was another heart-breaking job, for the halyards were frozen hard as iron and frequently slipped through one's grasp. But at last the sail was set, and, leaving my companion to hoist the headsails and coil down, I went aft to the tiller.

Working down the Quarters in short boards it was obvious that the cutter had as much canvas set as she could comfortably carry, and I already began to regret that we had not reefed the main-sail before starting, but she was sailing like a witch, and I determined to carry on as long as we dared. By the time Billy had finished his labours on deck the *Seabird* was near the Nass Beacon, and crossing the tail of the Spit we said farewell to Mersea.

The estuary of the Blackwater is a noble expanse of water and as fine a cruising ground as the small boat sailor could wish for, but a fresh easterly breeze meeting the ebb soon knocks up a sea that is very trying to little craft. Beating to windward under such conditions is always wet work, but this Boxing Day morning the *Seabird* half drowned us with spray. Sailing hard under a press of canvas she smashed the crests of the seas into showers of spindrift, which, flying aft, found out the weak places in our oilskins and drenched us to the skin. My companion soon sought shelter in the cabin, only emerging to handle the headsail sheets when we went about. Every moment the breeze freshened, until at last a vicious squall buried the cutter to her coamings. To carry on longer were to court disaster, so hauling the foresail a-weather we hove her to and set about shortening sail. Reefing when riding at anchor head to wind and tide is one thing, but with the yacht hove-to in a wild wind and welter sea it is quite another matter. That at least was my opinion as, standing on the rudder-







“I made repeated ineffectual dabs at the reef cringle.”

[To face page 227.]

head with one arm hugging the viciously kicking boom, I made repeated ineffectual dabs at the reef cringle with the end of the earing. At last, however, I contrived to reeve the pendant, and bending on the tackle we boused the cringle down to the bee-blocks. Having taken in a pair of reefs and stowed the foresail, we put the boat upon her course again. But what with the violent motion of the yacht, and the numbed condition of our hands, nearly an hour had been sacrificed, and by the time our task was completed the wind had increased to half a gale. Even with her reduced sail the *Seabird* was over-canvassed and badly wanted the third reef; but, being doubtful whether she would handle in such a sea under a close-reefed mainsail, we decided not to venture upon a further reduction. If it were wet work before, it was far worse now, for, hard driven as she was, the cutter scrunched through the seas instead of rising to them, and green water poured aft over decks and cabin-top in a seething smother. The bitter wind lashed our faces like a whip, whilst a continuous shower of stinging spray from the weather-bow almost blinded us. As we neared the Knoll Buoy it commenced to snow; but, fortunately, we had just gone about after a long board towards the Eagle and could now lay the buoy. Snow is the sailor's deadliest enemy in the winter-time, for it blots out buoys and landmarks as effectually as the densest fog. The Knoll was barely a mile distant, but I called to Billy to hand out the compass,

It was well that I took the precaution, for in a few minutes we were driving through a veritable blizzard. It would be difficult to imagine anything more comfortless than the well of a small yacht, five miles from the nearest land, under such conditions. Our faces were blue with cold, and our bodies chilled to the very bone, whilst the congealed blood upon our knuckles bore witness to the strenuous nature of the work in which we were engaged. Suddenly the big gas-buoy loomed up through the driving snow not a boat's length away, so close indeed that I instinctively luffed to clear it. Now we must steer by compass through the intricate Raysand Channel.

"Get out the chart, Billy, and tell me the course," I shouted to my companion. He dived into the cabin, but a moment later reappeared.

"Where is it?" he inquired; "there are no charts in the case."

Then I remembered that some weeks before I had taken the charts ashore to preserve them from damp, and had omitted to replace them.

"Never mind; it doesn't matter," said Billy; "I know the course; it's S.W. by S."

"I think's it more westerly than that," I ventured.

"Oh no, it isn't. I steered a compass course through here only a few weeks ago, and I am quite sure it was S.W. by S.," he asseverated.

"Well, I suppose you're right, but I certainly had an impression that it was more westerly."



When sheets were started the cutter bounded along like a hunted hare, and with wind and sea on the quarter it was all I could do to hold her. But running down wind, although pursued by a wild flurry of snow and sleet, was certainly preferable to beating against it, and our spirits rose at the thought of a following breeze for the remainder of the journey. Not a little pleased at having won our way round the Knoll under such trying conditions, we had a tot of neat whisky to celebrate the event, and then Billy retired to the cabin to fill and light a pipe for me. He remained below some little time, engaged in tidying up, as, despite our precautions, a number of things had got adrift. When at length he emerged he stood for a moment in a listening attitude, then, turning to me, inquired :

“Do you hear anything strange, skipper?”

I pulled off my sou'-wester, for the lugs covering my ears rendered me partially deaf.

Hear anything? Good Lord! I should think I could.

“Breakers ahead,” I shouted. “Lee oh!”

Billy jumped to the jib-sheet, and let it fly, whilst I, jamming the tiller down with my knees, hauled on the main for all I was worth.

As the cutter came to the wind a great sea broke on board, and, sweeping over the boat as if she were a half-tide rock, flooded the well. It was a wild moment. We stood knee-deep in icy-cold water, whilst overhead the boom thrashed savagely from side to side. Then, filling on the starboard

tack, the *Seabird* settled down to her work and began to retrace her steps. A few minutes later it stopped snowing, and there, close astern, lay the uncovered Buxey Sands, upon which the sea was breaking with a sullen roar plainly audible above the howling of the wind. Our escape had been a narrow one, for had the *Seabird* struck the sands the heavy sea must speedily have battered her to pieces, and in a little while nothing would have remained but a few pieces of storm-tossed wreckage to bear witness that another gallant vessel had paid tribute to Father Neptune.

Presently we sighted the North Buxey Buoy, and slackening off ran quickly down to it. Once in the channel we gybed and put the boat upon her course for the Burnham river. All was now plain sailing, for the marks were visible, and we could not go wrong. With the boom squared off the *Seabird* ran through the Raysand Channel as steadily as a train, and Billy was able to heat some soup. Moreover, the wind began to take off, and the young flood having gathered strength the sea became much smoother. Presently the sun burst through the gloom and lighting up the shimmering sea effected a complete transformation. Close at hand a clump of naked trees on Foulness marked the mouth of the river, and all around was laughing water. Never have I seen such a rapid change from foul weather to fair. It seemed, indeed, as if the forces of Nature had spent themselves in their ineffectual effort to drown us.

Our troubles were over, and, lighting a roaring fire, we dried the wet cabin as we reached up the river. By the time we arrived at Fambridge the only outward traces that remained of the "dusting" we had experienced were a mainsail wetted to the peak and faces thickly coated with salt; but the roar of the breakers on the Buxey Sands will live in our memories for many a long day.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### AN AUTUMN PASSAGE

It was already dusk when our train steamed into Lowestoft Station, and as we stayed to dine at an hotel on the way to the harbour, the shades of night had long fallen ere a shore boat dumped us on the deck of the *Talisman*. She was a five-ton cutter of obsolete type that had recently passed into the ownership of a young friend of ours, and in a rash moment we had consented to sail her round to Burnham, which was to be her future headquarters. Young Moreland, the owner, was to have accompanied us, but an untimely attack of influenza at the eleventh hour compelled him to stay at home. As it was already late in October he was anxious to get his new purchase round to the Crouch without delay, and, yielding to persuasion, Billy and I consented to make the passage without him.

An exceptionally fine autumn had prolonged the yachting season beyond its recognised limits, and there were still a good many vessels lying in the yacht basin. But the weather now showed signs of breaking up, and the craft moored in the tier were rolling uncomfortably to a heavy ground swell

that indicated a rough sea outside. After some fumbling about in the dark we opened the cabin doors and were assailed by that indescribable odour of stale bilge-water and paraffin that is familiar only to those who go down to the sea in small yachts. It was obvious that the cabin had not been inhabited for a considerable time, and so we removed the fore-hatch and opened the scuttles to allow a free current of air to pass through the vessel. In the meantime we sat on deck and smoked a final pipe before turning in. The prospects for the morrow were certainly not very promising. The wind came in vicious squalls, and the yacht rolled and strained at her warps in a manner that presaged an uncomfortable night. But it was chilly on deck, and we soon sought the shelter of the cabin. I use the word "shelter" advisedly, for it embraces all that the tiny saloon had to offer. There was certainly no comfort to be had below decks in the *Talisman*. A cold clamminess pervaded the cabin, and the cushions and blankets were damp and musty. Everything had a dilapidated appearance, and the vessel was so deficient in head-room that one could hardly sit upright. A brief examination of the bedding decided us to turn in "all standing," and wrapped in our overcoats we made shift to get a few hours' sleep on the floor.

We turned out the next morning at daybreak to find that the weather had taken a turn for the worse. There was a fresh south-east breeze, and a driving mizzle of rain that had evidently come

to stay. Outside the harbour the sea was breaking on the beach with a sullen roar, and even in the yacht basin the *Talisman* charged about and slapped the surface of the water with her counter like an infuriated young whale. It was certainly no weather for a seventy-mile trip round the coast in a five-tonner of doubtful seaworthiness. But we were young, and pride forbade us to return home without making the attempt. So we hardened our hearts and set about getting breakfast.

The gear was in a deplorable state, and a full hour was cut to waste in getting things in some sort of order. The flood tide had been flowing for four hours when at seven o'clock we got our warps aboard preparatory to leaving the yacht basin, but we hoped to carry the flood as far as Southwold. Lying in the middle of the tier we had to pass over the warps of several other vessels, pushing them beneath the cutter's keel with a boathook. As luck would have it, one of these warps jammed between our stern-post and rudder, and whilst we were endeavouring to clear it, the *Talisman* swung foul of a smart yacht lying alongside. The commotion brought out the owner, who expressed his opinion of the *Talisman* and her crew in language of the most lurid description, what time he stood on deck shivering in his pyjamas. At last we got clear, and hastily setting the single-reefed mainsail and jib, fetched out of the basin. Then we had to beat down the narrow outer harbour, but, what with a foul tide and being blanketed by the South



Pier, progress was so slow that we were on the point of abandoning the trip altogether, when an outward-bound steam-drifter threw us a line and very kindly towed us out. We held on to the friendly smack until we had a good offing, and then, parting company, filled on the port tack to sail through the Covehithe Channel. Although to some extent protected by the Newcome and Barnard Sands we found plenty of sea, and the *Talisman* rolled heavily as she reached along close hauled.

"We shall have a rare dusting when we get clear of the sands," remarked my companion as he pensively sucked at his pipe.

"Yes," I replied, "and the breeze looks like freshening. I wonder what the glass is doing."

But there was not an aneroid on board, and so we drove on, trusting that the weather would improve as the day advanced. We fetched Kessingland on that board, and then had to beat round Covehithe Ness. The seas were now steep and hollow, and the little cutter hove her bows high in the air. The water streamed aft over deck and cabin top, more than was pleasant finding its way into the well. The yacht seemed to make but little progress through the water, but the flood tide carrying her over the bottom, we gradually won our way round the Ness. In the meantime we had been making discoveries. First a cleat carried away, the three-inch screws drawing clean out of the coaming. "Looks like dry rot," was my comment, to which Billy replied, "I believe the old thing is as ripe as

a pear.” Then we found that the water was over the cabin floor. Fortunately we were then clear of the sands, and had plenty of sea-room to heave-to and pump her out.

Having cleared her of water, we held a hurried consultation. Prudence prompted a return to Lowestoft, but neither of us liked the idea of acknowledging defeat.

“Oh, hang it all,” said Billy at last, “we can’t turn tail now. Why, we can fetch along the coast as far as Aldeburgh, and will only have a few miles to beat round the Ness, and then it is a fair wind to Harwich. Let’s try and get into Felixstowe Dock to-night.”

The sea was high, but the waves were long and regular. The wind, moreover, seemed inclined to back further to the eastward, which would make the conditions more favourable for us.

“All right,” I said at last; “we’ll go on for a bit, anyhow, and if the worst comes to the worst we’ll put into Southwold.”

So, taking our courage in both hands, we put the *Talisman* on her course again. We could lay along the coast comfortably now, and even eased the sheets a little, but steering was tricky work. The seas had to be carefully watched, and the vessel luffed to meet every dangerous-looking wave. Occasionally a breaking crest would come on board, giving us a good sousing, and despite our oilskins we had not a dry thread between us. The tide had now turned, but heeled to the covering board the

cutter was tramping along in fine style. Considering the unsound condition of sails and gear, we were "carrying on," but we were anxious to make a port as soon as possible. The *Talisman* certainly made a good deal of water, but occasional spells of bailing kept it under, and our spirits rose as we reeled off mile after mile. We passed Southwold in a storm of rain which completely blotted the town from view. All we saw of the place was the end of the pier and the dim outline of the lighthouse. To enter the harbour, which lies about a mile to the southward, in such thick weather was out of the question, and so we plugged along on our course. The weather cleared when we were off Dunwich, and the sun made a sickly effort to shine for a few minutes, lightening up some picturesque little cottages that nestled 'neath the cliff. But scenery had no attractions for us that morning, and we should have much preferred the wall of a dock to gaze upon. The trend of the coast now brought us closer to the wind, and we had to get the sheets hard in to lay our course. Progress consequently became slow, and it was all we could do to stem the tide. Then we had to make a board to weather Thorpe Ness. A wicked sea was running on the Sizewell Bank, and we had to ply the bucket vigorously to keep the cutter afloat. Fortunately the wind freed a little, enabling the *Talisman* to win round the Ness, but we had paid a dear price for victory. Our foresail slatted in ribbons from the forestay, and the dinghy was swamped. The



boat turned over and over, wallowing in our wake like a porpoise, and holding the yacht back. Seizing my knife I ruthlessly cut her adrift, and she was soon lost to view. The cutter could now lay her course again, and gradually fetched along the coast past Aldeburgh. The lofty lighthouse on Orford Ness was plainly visible, and as we drew nearer to it, our spirits began to rise again. Once round the Ness and our troubles would, we thought, be over, for we should have a slashing beam wind that would rapidly carry us to Harwich Harbour. But the fates frowned upon us, and when within a mile of the lighthouse the wind broke us off, and we could not lay the Point.

We were now in sorry plight. With wind and tide against us we could barely hold our own, and there was no prospect of weathering the Ness until the flood made. A sort of dumb misery settled upon us, and hour after hour we mechanically worked the boat and bailed. Then the blackness of night began to close upon the *Talisman*, and the lantern at the top of the lofty lighthouse solemnly winked at us. But time stands still for no man, and presently the tide began to ease. Slowly but surely we forged ahead. With the young flood gaining strength our progress improved, but we now had to encounter a wicked sea. I often think that the man who drew the chart of this district was a bit of a wag. "Strong Ripples" are indicated off Orford Ness. Well, those strong ripples came at us from all directions, and washed the *Talisman's*

decks as if she were a half-tide rock, and we, her crew, were hard put to it to keep her afloat. Battered and bruised we plied the bucket for dear life, and gradually won our way round the Ness into Hollesley Bay. But victory had not left us scathless, for the rotten old sails showed many a rent. In the cabin the water lay deep over the lee bunk, and our shoregoing clothes were floating about. But we now had the wind on the beam, and, with the tide flooding strongly, began to reel off the miles at a merry rate. The yacht, however, was leaking badly, and although we continued to bail vigorously we could make no impression upon the water. She had evidently been badly strained in the rough-and-tumble off Orford Ness, and being without a dinghy we were in sore straits. Shaking out a reef we drove her for all she was worth in a desperate attempt to make Harwich, but at last Billy threw down the bucket. "I can bail no more," he said, "I am done."

I took a look round to see if there was any vessel near at hand to render us assistance, but not a light was visible to seaward. On the land side, however, I made out the lights of Bawdsey Manor, high up on the cliff. "We will try and get into Bawdsey Haven," I said; "it's a devil of a place, and I haven't been in there for years, but it's our only chance. Look out for a couple of lanterns on the beach. We have to get them in one and run in on those marks." Easing the mainsheet a little, I put her head for the spot where I thought

the entrance should be. Several lights could be seen on the shore, but none that had the appearance of leading lights, and so we rushed blindly on with our hearts in our mouths.

“Breakers ahead!” Billy suddenly screamed, and immediately we were in a hell of seething waters. With a sickening scrunch the *Talisman* struck the shingle bar. The yacht paused for a moment, and then a great wave picked her up and literally hurled her into the smooth waters of the haven. But the cutter was now quite water-logged, and in imminent danger of foundering. She rolled heavily from side to side as the tide carried her swiftly over the ground. Billy was throwing off his clothes preparatory to diving overboard. “Hold on,” I shouted, “there’s the light on the ferryboat. We have only a few yards to go. Never mind the anchor, I’ll run her ashore.” Then I shoved the helm over, and as she came to the wind, her keel grated on the shingle beach. The passage perilous was won, and we lost no time in getting on dry land. Fishing our clothes out of the water in the cabin we hastily made them up into a great dripping bundle. Then having thrown the anchor over the side we left the ill-fated *Talisman* and sought refuge at a little inn, where we were treated with much hospitality.

The next day, when we turned out, all that was visible of the *Talisman* was her masthead. Fortunately the owner had, without our knowledge, insured her for the trip at Lloyd’s, and as she was





“ A great wave picked her up and literally hurled her into the smooth  
water of the haven.”

[To face page 240.



subsequently declared to be what is technically known as a "constructive total loss," he recovered her full value. Billy and I came to the conclusion that our clothes were also "a constructive total loss," but *we* had no kindly underwriter to compensate us. We had learnt, however, to give the North Sea in general, and Orford Ness in particular, a wide berth during the autumn months, and perhaps the knowledge was not altogether dear at the price of a suit of clothes apiece.

THE END





# CHAPMAN & HALL'S NEW BOOKS

---

## TROPICAL RECONSTRUCTION

By J. H. HARRIS. Demy 8vo.

## THE PRISONERS OF MAINZ

By ALEC WAUGH, Author of "The Loom of Youth." Illustrated.  
Crown 8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

By Marshal F. FOCH, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces.  
Translated by Hilaire Belloc. With Maps and Plans. Demy  
8vo, 21s. net.

## IMPRESSIONS OF THE KAISER

By DAVID JAYNE HILL, formerly American Ambassador to Berlin.  
Demy 8vo, 12s. 6d. net.

Mr. Jayne Hill, who was the American Ambassador to Germany, has a most vivid sense of character, and his reminiscences afford one of the most eloquent testimonies to the duplicity and acquisitive lust of the German Emperor. He knew the Kaiser very well, and he shows him up in no half-tone, for the dangerous tyrant that he is.

## THE DICKENS CIRCLE

A Narrative of the Novelist's Friendships. By J. W. T. LEY.  
Illustrated. (*Second Edition.*) Demy 8vo, 21s. net.

## OLD SAWS AND MODERN INSTANCES

By W. L. COURTNEY, LL.D., Fellow of New College, Oxford;  
Author of "The Literary Man's Bible," etc. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

This is a collection of distinguished, scholarly essays covering ground as wide as separates Æschylus from Beerbohm Tree, and Socrates from Thomas Hardy.

## THE FRANCE I KNOW

By WINIFRED STEPHENS. With Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 12s. 6d. net.

Miss Stephens knows France from coast to border-line, and she knows its people no less than its landmarks. This graphic, critical, interpretative volume reveals the heart of France to her ally as no book of the kind has succeeded in doing.

## OUR ALLIES AND ENEMIES IN THE NEAR EAST

By JEAN VICTOR BATES. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

Miss Bates worked with the late W. F. Bailey on his well-known "Slavs of the War Zone," and this admirably informative volume carries forward their work of investigation and analysis. It is a most picturesque and entertaining study, apart from its authority and sound judgment.

## ENGLISH HISTORY IN SHAKESPEARE

By J. A. R. MARRIOTT, M.P. for Oxford, Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. (*Second Edition.*) Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

---

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.

# SPORT AND TRAVEL, etc.

---

## THE SURGEON'S LOG

Being Impressions of the Far East. By J. JOHNSTON ABRAHAM.  
Illustrated. (*Eighth Edition.*) Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. net.

---

## TIGERLAND

Reminiscences of Forty Years' Sport and Adventure in Bengal.  
By C. E. GOULDSBURY. Illustrated. (*Third Edition.*) Crown  
8vo, 3s. net.

---

## TIGERSLAYER BY ORDER

(DIGBY DAVIES, late Bombay Police.) By C. E. GOULDSBURY.  
With many Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

---

## THE LOG OF A SNOB

By PERCY WESTERMAN. With Illustrations by Edward L.  
Wigfull. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. net.

---

## OURSELVES AND GERMANY

By E. J. DILLON. With an Introduction by the Hon. WM.  
HUGHES, Prime Minister of Australia. (*Third Edition.*) Demy  
8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

---

## THE SLAVS OF THE WAR ZONE

By the Right Hon. W. F. BAILEY, C.B. With 24 Illustrations  
and Map. Crown 8vo, 3s. net.

---

## WAR WANDERINGS

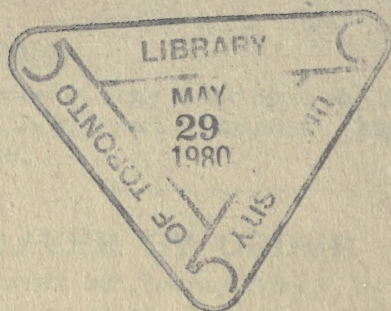
By GEORGE RENWICK. Illustrated. Demy 8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

---

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.







60864

PER  
110



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

GV  
814  
C6

Cooke, Francis B  
In tidal waters



